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No. 1028

CHURCH AND STATE IN MEXICO FROM CALLES TO CARDENAS

1924-1938

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Denton, Texas

May, 1976

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1976

Joseph, Harriett Denise, Church and State in Mexico from Calles to Cárdenas, 1924-1938, Doctor of Philosophy (History), May, 1976, 388 pp., bibliography, 146 titles.

This dissertation presents an overview of Church-State relations in Mexico from 1924 to 1938. It examines the actions and motives of prominent national leaders, the papacy, the episcopate, and the Mexican citizenry to determine justification and culpability.

A variety of sources were consulted. The Archivo de la Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa and the Centro de Estudios de Historia de México contained a wealth of primary materials. Published documents, memoirs, contemporary accounts and oral history interviews were used extensively. Frequently cited newspapers and magazines included Current History, New York Times, Excelsior, La Palabra Nacionalista, and El Universal.

Two secondary works, Jean Meyer's La Cristiada and David Bailey's JViva Cristo Rey!, were indispensable. Also noteworthy were the writings of Frank Brandenburg, Lyle Brown, John Dulles, L. Ethan Ellis, Jesús García Gutiérrez, William Johnson, Alan Kirshner, John Meacham, Albert Michaels, Alicia Olivera Sedano, and Antonio Ríus Facius.

The dissertation is organized on a chronological

basis. Chapters I through XI cover, respectively, the Church in Mexico to 1924, Calles' relations with the Church to 1926, the clerical withdrawal, the Cristero rebellion, unsuccessful attempts at an accord, the 1929 settlement and its impact on the Catholic community, Church-State relations from 1929 to 1931, the renewal of conflict and educational issues, the deterioration of the religious situation in 1934, Cárdenas' religious and educational problems in 1935, and the reconciliation between Church and State.

This dissertation presents several conclusions. When Calles enforced the anticlerical provisions of the Constitution of 1917, the clergy withdrew from the churches in protest. The episcopate as a body bore a moral responsibility for the Cristero rebellion that resulted, but avoided implication in the movement. Because the Church's supporters were in the minority, that institution in 1929 accepted a settlement requiring clerical obedience to the constitution. Churchmen consoled their parishioners with the thought that the Church would rise again.

The controversial settlement caused dissension in the Catholic community and proved a failure. By late 1931 Church and State were again at odds and a second Cristero rebellion was in the making. Clerical opposition to sexual and socialist education intensified attacks upon the Church. Not until 1936 did President Cárdenas moderate his

religious policy. The hierarchy, characterized in the years under consideration by a lack of unanimity, did not respond immediately. But, changes in episcopal leadership, plus a realistic attitude in Rome, facilitated a durable religious accord.

The dissertation stresses Calles' responsibility for much of the religious turmoil in Mexico from 1924 to 1938. At a high cost to his country, Calles subordinated the Church to the State. Cárdenas was able to moderate his religious policy because the power struggle with the Church had already been won. The experience of the Calles' years had convinced most churchmen of the need to normalize relations with the State. By the 1940's Church and State in Mexico were able to achieve peaceful coexistence.

PREFACE

The history of Church-State¹ relations in Mexico is complex and multi-faceted. Although under the superior jurisdiction of the Spanish monarchy, the colonial Roman Catholic Church attained special privileges, significant wealth, and considerable power. With the coming of independence in 1821, both the Mexican nation and the Church in Mexico were freed from the authority of the Spanish crown. The new nation then faced the task of defining the role that the Catholic Church was to play in Mexican life. Nineteenth-century Mexican history offers ample evidence that secular leaders and churchmen often disagreed violently as to what constituted a "satisfactory" relationship between Church and State. The power struggle between the two institutions lasted well into the twentieth century, when the Mexican government was finally able to assert its dominance.

Many authors during the last half century have dealt with the subjugation of Church to State in twentieth-century Mexico. Their books, whether written with scholarly detachment or obvious bias, have focused on events from

¹The word church, when capitalized, refers to the Roman Catholic Church. The word state, when capitalized, refers to the Republic of Mexico.

1926-1929, when the Mexican clergy withdrew from the churches and triggered a religiously motivated rebellion. While undeniably significant, this period is only one phase of a larger conflict. The arreglos achieved between Church and State in 1929 were only a temporary truce. They allowed the clergy to return to the churches and ultimately ended the civil war but did not settle the crucial issues between Church and State. On both the state and national levels outbursts of anticlericalism and religious persecution occurred during the 1930's. Mexican secular leaders and Catholic clergymen again found themselves at odds, and a second civil war developed. Not until 1936 did the national government become more tolerant of Catholicism and relations gradually improve between the Roman Catholic Church and the Mexican State.

The intent of this paper is to present a comprehensive treatment of the crucial period of Mexican Church-State relations during the years 1924-1938. Because the problems of the present are rooted in the past, Chapter I presents a brief history of the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico to 1924. Succeeding chapters trace the story from the inauguration of Plutarco Elias Calles' national campaign of anticlericalism to the moderation of Lázaro Cárdenas' official attitude toward the Church. The roles of the various groups active during the period--key national and state leaders; the papacy, the hierarchy, and the lower

clergy; the Mexican citizenry--are examined to determine motivation, justification, and culpability.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	iv
Chapter	
I. BACKGROUND	1
II. PLUTARCO ELIAS CALLES	30
III. THE WITHDRAWAL	64
IV. THE CRISTERO REBELLION	96
V. STALEMATE	133
VI. THE CONTROVERSIAL RELIGIOUS ACCORD	165
VII. A TEMPORARY TRUCE	206
VIII. CONFLICT RENEWED	247
IX. CALLES, CARDENAS, AND THE CHURCH	280
X. A TROUBLED YEAR	302
XI. RECONCILIATION	334
APPENDIX	372
BIBLIOGRAPHY	376

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

From the earliest days of Spanish conquest, the Roman Catholic religion became an integral part of life in Latin America. Catholicism served as an inspiration and a tool for the Spanish monarchs who wished to establish in the New World, as in the Old, a rule based upon the principles of "orthodoxy and absolutism."¹

A series of papal bulls issued during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries gave the ruling family of Spain extensive jurisdiction over the Roman Catholic Church in America. In 1493 Pope Alexander VI conferred upon Ferdinand and Isabella title to Spain's newly discovered lands in the Indies. In return, he imposed upon them the task of structuring the Church and Christianizing the natives in these New World possessions. This same pope in 1501 agreed to allow the crown to collect the tithes and first fruits of the colonial Church. However, he required that the tithes be expended to construct church buildings and missions and to sustain the clergy in the colonies.

¹France V. Scholes, "An Overview of the Colonial Church," in Richard E. Greenleaf, ed., The Roman Catholic Church in Colonial Latin America, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), p. 19.

Alexander's successor, Julius II, in 1508 conceded to the Catholic monarchs the right of full patronage, which carried the right to present or nominate "suitable" persons to exercise religious offices in Spanish America. Collectively, these concessions formed the Patronato Real, whereby the papacy allowed the crown to intervene in ecclesiastical affairs in the New World in exchange for spreading and maintaining the faith there.²

Under the Patronato Real the Roman Catholic Church in Spanish America was closely regulated and supervised. While the king nominated colonial archbishops and bishops, royal officials in the Indies made nominations for appointments to lesser benefices. Upon assuming their posts, members of the hierarchy were required to swear an oath of obedience to the crown. Civil permission was required for the emigration of clergy to the New World; the building of churches, missions, and convents; the determination of colonial dioceses; the expenditure of most tithes; and the circulation of papal literature in the colonies. By employing these and other controls, the Spanish monarchy exercised "quasi-

² Ibid., pp. 21-22; John Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America: A History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 12-13, 16-17; W. Eugene Shiels, King and Church: The Rise and Fall of the Patronato Real (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1961), pp. 77, 90-91, 109-111; Nancy M. Farriss, Crown and Clergy in Colonial Mexico, 1759-1821: The Crisis of Ecclesiastical Privilege (London: Athlone Press, 1968), p. 7.

"pontifical" mastery over the Church in the overseas empire.³

Despite the close supervision of the crown, the colonial Church became extremely powerful. Catholicism was the only religion permitted in the Spanish possessions. Catholic clergymen enjoyed special privileges, including the fuero eclesiástico, which exempted them from the jurisdiction of civil courts. Furthermore, ecclesiastics virtually monopolized education during the colonial period. The Church as an institution owned religious buildings, accumulated numerous tracts of land, and acquired vast sums of money. Exercising the right of mortmain, the Church by the end of the eighteenth century owned an estimated one half of the productive real estate in New Spain alone. These powers and special privileges enabled the Roman Catholic Church and its personnel to exercise an authoritative voice in colonial affairs.⁴

When New Spain initiated her struggle for independence in 1810, the papacy and the Mexican hierarchy opposed the movement. Events in Spain and America during the next

³Mecham, Church and State, pp. 20-21, 27, 31-33, 36; Scholes, "An Overview," p. 22; Shiels, King and Church, pp. 6,8.

⁴Farriss, Crown and Clergy, pp. 6, 15; Scholes, "An Overview," pp. 24-25; Mecham, Church and State, pp. 29, 35, 38-39; Frank Brandenburg, The Making of Modern Mexico (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 24, 29, 188.

decade, however, caused the officials of the Church to reverse this stand. Mexican revolutionaries quickly revealed their reverence for Catholicism. The Chilpancingo Congress, which prematurely declared independence in November of 1813, provided for the celebration of "concordats with the Holy Pontiff for the governance of the Catholic Church, in order that no other religion shall be recognized." In the following year the Constitution of Apatzingán, which resulted from the proceedings at Chilpancingo, named Catholicism as the only religion recognized in Mexico.⁵

While the insurgents were demonstrating their loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church, Spain was alienating that institution. In the colonies Spanish military forces, angered by the collaboration of some members of the lower clergy with the rebels, disregarded ecclesiastical immunities. Events in Spain, however, were even more disturbing to churchmen than their mistreatment at the hands of Spanish troops in the Americas. When Napoleon Bonaparte placed his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne in 1808, infuriated Spaniards rebelled. A national Cortes at Cádiz ultimately assumed sovereignty and wrote a constitution with provisions that threatened the rights and properties of the Church and its personnel. Distressed by the liberalism of the

⁵David C. Bailey, Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1974), p. 8; Mecham, Church and State, pp. 46-47; Ernest Gruening, Mexico and Its Heritage (New York: Century Company, 1929), p. 187.

Constitution of 1812, Spanish conservatives were relieved when Ferdinand VII, the legitimate monarch, resumed the throne in 1814 and repudiated the legislation of the Cortes. A revolt led by Rafael Riego in 1820, however, forced King Ferdinand to reinstate the Constitution of 1812 and agree to a parliamentary monarchy. A new Cortes then enacted a series of liberal, anti-religious measures that struck at the traditional status of the clergy. Confronted with this situation, members of the Mexican episcopate did an about face in 1821. Deciding to favor independence, they threw their support to emancipator Agustín Iturbide, who guaranteed to preserve Catholicism and respect pastoral privileges.⁶

By championing the rebels, the Mexican Catholic Church hoped not only to gain immunity from liberal Spanish reformers but also to remove itself from secular control. According to the Ultra-montanist position espoused by the clergy, patronage was spiritual in origin and papal concessions of power were not transferable. Therefore, if Mexico gained her independence, the prerogatives formerly exercised by the Spanish crown would revert to the papacy. When Mexico

⁶Farriss, Crown and Clergy, pp. 2?3, 249-25?; Stanley G. Payne, A History of Spain and Portugal, 2 vols. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 2:426-428, 43?, 431; Mecham, Church and State, pp. 55, 341-342.

achieved self-government in 1821, Archbishop Pedro José de Fonte advised Iturbide that the Patronato Real conceded by Alexander VI and Julius II to Spain had ended. If the new Mexican government wished to obtain similar rights of patronage, he said, it must seek the appropriate consessions from Rome. Meanwhile, responsibility for filling vacant ecclesiastical posts devolved upon Church officials in each dioceseis.⁷

During the 1820's, Mexican secular leaders rejected this declaration of independence by the Church. Adopting Regalist arguments, they insisted that patronage was laic in origin and inherent in temporal sovereignty. Consequently, while the Mexican Constitution of 1824 recognized Catholicism as the only legal religion within the country, it provided for the national exercise of patronage. The Mexican Senate in 1826 likewise declared Catholicism to be under the protection of the State, but also asserted that the government had the right of patronage. Because neither ecclesiastical or civil officials would bend, perhaps as many as one third of the clerical posts within Mexico remained vacant. And, Pope Gregory XVI refused to recognize Mexico while its government defied his authority. Distressed by this state of affairs, President Anastacio Bustamante in 1831 relinquished at least temporarily claims

⁷Mecham, Church and State, pp. 3-4, 62, 342-343. The terms Mexican Catholic Church and Mexican Church refer to the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico.

of national patronage. A triumph for the Roman Catholic Church, Bustamante's decision ushered in a period of relative harmony between Church and State.⁸

Freed from secular surveillance, the Roman Catholic Church thrived during the first half of the nineteenth century. Catholic clerical discipline was generally lenient, and regular and secular churchmen continued to enjoy the *fuero eclesiástico*. Because Church income exceeded governmental revenues, priests were able to exert considerable influence in the political arena. The holding of numerous mortgages allowed clergymen to dominate agricultural activities. And, complacent religious personnel utilized their predominance in the field of education to condition the Mexican people to accept the Church, its power, and its privileges.⁹

Not all Mexicans accepted this situation. A growing Liberal Party wished to free Mexico from the stranglehold that reactionary elements--the Church, the landed aristocracy, and the military establishment--had on her. Liberals dreamed of a country in which the gente de razón were equal before the law, special privileges were abolished, and

⁸ Ibid., pp. 48-49, 343-344, 346-348; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 9.

⁹ Henry Bamford Parkes, A History of Mexico, Sentry Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), pp. 176-177; Mecham, Church and State, pp. 344, 351; Brandenburg, Modern Mexico, p. 185.

clerical activities were limited to the spiritual realm. The first opportunity for these discontented Mexicans to express their goals occurred in 1833. In that year alleged liberal Antonio López de Santa Anna overthrew Bustamante, and after being elected president placed the Mexican polity in the hands of Valentín Gómez Farías. The energetic Gómez Farías regime enacted a series of measures that removed the right of patronage from the Catholic hierarchy, secularized the educational system, confiscated various ecclesiastical properties, ended civil enforcement of the collection of tithes, enabled monastics to renounce their vows, and prohibited priests from discussing political topics from the pulpit.¹⁰

Conservatives quickly responded to the challenge flung at them by the Gómez Farías administration. Initiating a counterrevolution, the clergy and the military united under the banner of "Religion and Privileges." Santa Anna, an opportunist of little principle, renounced his liberal ties and assumed leadership of reactionary forces that defeated the liberal contingent, expelled Gómez Farías, and rescinded the anticlerical decrees. The privileged position of the Church was once again

¹⁰ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 9-12; Mecham, Church and State, pp. 348-352; Charles C. Cumberland, Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 181.

secure. Pope Gregory XVI was so pleased by this turn of events that in 1836 he accorded recognition to the Republic of Mexico. The Mexican government then dispatched Manuel Díaz de Bonilla to Rome to seek papal concessions. Unlike his fifteenth and sixteenth-century predecessors, however, Gregory refused to grant Mexican civil authorities anything approaching the colonial Patronato Real. Accordingly, the Church in Mexico remained a virtually autonomous institution.¹¹

During some twenty years of largely conservative rule from 1834-1855, restless Mexican liberals watched the Roman Catholic Church solidify its position as the wealthiest and most powerful force in the country. Their growing discontent culminated in the Revolution of Ayutla which began in 1854 and deposed Santa Anna in 1855. Juan Alvarez, nominal head of the revolution, then became chief of state, although he was destined to remain in office for only three months. During this period an Indian from Oaxaca, Benito Juárez sponsored an act that reorganized the Mexican legal system and thereby limited the juridical immunity of the clergy and the military. Strong reaction to this law,

¹¹Mecham, Church and State, pp. 352, 354-355; Luis Medina Ascencio, Méjico y el Vaticano, 2d ed. (Méjico: Editorial Jus, 1965), vol. I, La Santa Sede y la emancipación mexicano, pp. xvii-xviii.

combined with other problems, forced Alvarez to resign in December of 1855.¹²

Ignacio Comonfort, formerly secretary of war, then became provisional president. Although the new executive was fairly moderate in his own political views, his administration enacted two measures repugnant to the Church. Ley Lerdo, named for Minister of Treasury Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, disamortized most of the property held in mortmain by the Roman Catholic Church. The law stated that no corporation could own any real estate other than that directly used for purposes of public worship. Property affected by this edict was to be sold at public auction. Proceeds, minus a sales tax, were to be returned to the corporation. A second statute, Ley Iglesias, limited clerical revenues and prevented the exploitation of the poor by setting maximum limits on the fees that priests could charge for their services.¹³

Threatened by the curtailing of their judicial fuero, the loss of their productive real estate, and the spectre of greatly decreased revenue, Mexican churchmen spoke out.

¹²Mecham, Church and State, pp. 359-360, 362-363; Walter V. Scholes, Mexican Politics during the Juárez Regime (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1969), pp. 5-6.

¹³Walter Scholes, Mexican Politics, pp. 6, 14-15; Mecham, Church and State, pp. 362-363.

While insisting that religious corporations had the same right as individuals to own property, they claimed that estimates of ecclesiastical wealth were greatly exaggerated. Denying that priests exploited the people, clerical apologists called attention to traditional Catholic support of schools, hospitals, and organized charities. The main argument used by the clergy to defend themselves against attack, however, was the simple assertion that the State had no jurisdiction over the Church in Mexico.¹⁴

Unimpressed by these arguments, Mexican liberals constructed a constitution that struck at almost every area of clerical strength and prerogative. Article five, seeking to weaken monastic orders, nullified the heretofore compulsory observance of religious vows. Article thirteen attacked the customary *fuero* by prohibiting any person from being tried in private courts. Provision twenty-seven, a restatement of *Ley Lerdo*, outlawed corporate ownership of property except that used for purposes of worship. Designed to prevent priests from playing a direct role in politics, Articles fifty-six and seventy-seven declared that no clergyman could serve as deputy, senator, or president. Finally, to insure the supremacy of civil authority over

¹⁴Walter Scholes, Mexican Politics, p. 19.

the Church, Article 123 empowered the government to intervene in matters of religious worship and outward ecclesiastical form as designated by law.¹⁵

Lay supporters of the Church censured the Constitution of 1857 for failing to name Catholicism as Mexico's only legal faith, depriving the clergy of their basic rights, interfering with the Church's right to own property, and allowing the legislature to intervene in religious matters. Evidencing similar feelings, the archbishop of Mexico in November of 1857 instructed his subordinates not to take the required oath of allegiance to the new constitution. Furthermore, priests were not to hear the confessions of or grant Christian burial to any Mexicans who did swear this oath of allegiance.¹⁶

Conservative defiance ultimately led to rebellion. The Plan of Tacubaya, issued in December of 1857, called for the establishment of a dictatorship subservient only to the Church, the reestablishment of traditional fueros,

¹⁵Francisco Zarco, Historia del congreso constituyente de 1857, edición acordada en Veracruz por el c. Venustiano Carranza (México: Imprenta I. Escalante, 1916), pp. 168, 263, 974, 982, 996; Jesús García Gutiérrez [Félix Navarrete], De Cabarrús a Carranza: La legislación anticatólica en México (México: Editorial Jus, 1957), pp. 57-58.

¹⁶Wilfrid Hardy Callicott, Liberalism in Mexico, 1857-1929 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1931), pp. 5, 7-8; Walter Scholes, Mexican Politics, p. 21.

the acceptance of the exclusivity of Catholicism, and the inviolability of corporate property and revenues. While rejecting the Constitution of 1857, the reactionaries recognized the legitimacy of elected-President Comonfort, who adhered to the Tacubayan pronouncement. With Comonfort's defection, leadership of the Liberal Party passed to Benito Juárez, who assumed control of the executive branch in January of 1858. Mexico then found herself in the bewildering position of having two governments--one liberal, one conservative--vying for power. Triumphant during the early stages of the War of the Reform, conservatives established themselves in Mexico City. Forced to flee, Juárez abandoned the capital and eventually found his way to Veracruz.¹⁷

The Juárez regime announced its compliance with the Constitution of 1857 and issued a series of Reform Laws in 1859-1860. Desirous of breaking the economic power of the Church which was aiding his opponents and of acquiring revenue to finance the liberals' military campaigns, Juárez in July, 1859, issued the first of these decrees. It called for the outright confiscation of all wealth administered by the clergy, except for church buildings and clerical residences necessary to the continuance of the

¹⁷ Walter Scholes, Mexican Politics, pp. 23-24; Mecham, Church and State, pp. 362-363.

faith. This decree also provided for the separation of Church and State, guaranteed the right of public worship to all religions, suppressed monastic orders, and prohibited novitiates from entering convents. Additional liberal measures enacted during this period made marriage a civil contract, recognized legal separations, and reduced the number of authorized feast days.¹⁸

Although impressive on paper, the Reform Laws were not enforceable in areas of Mexico dominated by conservatives. Not until December of 1860 was the liberal army able to retake Mexico City and regain command over much of the country. When Juárez reentered the capital on January 11, 1861, the liberals felt that they would at last be able to realize their dreams for Mexico. Responding to the detrimental role played by churchmen in the War of the Reform, the victorious government prohibited priests from preaching against the State, wearing clerical garb in public, or holding religious demonstrations outside of church buildings. These new restrictions, when combined with already existing restraints upon the Catholic Church and its personnel, composed a formidable body of anti-clerical legislation. The impact of this legislation was considerably lessened, however, by the liberals' continued

¹⁸ Walter Scholes, Mexican Politics, pp. 43-44, 47-49; Mecham, Church and State, p. 366.

inability to implement their regulations.¹⁹

Both internal and external difficulties hampered the workings of the government. Even though Juárez received a decisive majority of the votes cast in the special presidential election held in early 1861, dissension was evident within liberal ranks. Lack of adequate financial resources also plagued the administration. Seizure of Church properties and other means of acquiring funds failed to produce sufficient revenue to keep the nation solvent. Consequently, in July Juárez suspended payments on foreign and domestic debts for a two year period. France, England, and Spain--the three European nations most affected by this suspension--agreed to intervene in Mexico for the purpose of debt collection. By January, 1862, European troops had landed on Mexican soil. Within three months Spain and England, realizing that France's Napoleon III had imperialistic designs on Mexico, withdrew their forces. When Napoleon's army remained, war erupted between France and Mexico.²⁰

Having failed in their own attempt to overthrow liberalism, Mexican conservatives endorsed the French move to depose Juárez. Again forced to quit the Federal District,

¹⁹Walter Scholes, Mexican Politics, pp. 56-57; Callcott, Liberalism in Mexico, pp. 34-37.

²⁰Walter Scholes, Mexican Politics, pp. 72-75, 77, 86-87.

the liberal government spent the War of the Intervention moving from one town to another. The French troops headquartered themselves in Mexico City and conquered a considerable segment of the Mexican interior by 1864. In that year, to the delight of reactionaries, Ferdinand Maximillian, an Austrian Hapsburg, became emperor of Mexico. The clergy hoped that the new monarch would undo the reforms of the previous decade. They were sorely disappointed when the emperor not only maintained existing land laws but also espoused sentiments concerning Church-State relations that were alarmingly similar to those of the Juaristas. Nevertheless, the Catholic hierarchy, like other conservative elements, preferred a Mexico ruled by Maximillian to one governed by Juárez and the Liberal Party.²¹

The wishes of Mexican conservatives proved of little consequence, as liberal forces in 1867 captured and executed the unfortunate emperor. Juárez reentered Mexico City and served in the presidency until his death in 1872, when Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada became chief of state. Under Lerdo's leadership, the Reform Laws were incorporated into the Constitution of 1857, and liberal principles at last seemed to be on the verge of realization. Once more, however, liberal hopes were frustrated. After serving five

²¹ Ibid., pp. 75-76, 100, 111; Mecham, Church and State, pp. 369-370.

years in office Lerdo de Tejada was ousted by Porfirio Díaz, who assumed dictatorial control of Mexico. Díaz' ascendancy ended the Reform Era with its major goals unachieved.²²

The Porfirato provided a reprieve for the Roman Catholic Church. While he refused to repeal the Reform Laws, Díaz allowed them to fall into disuse. He chose to conciliate, rather than antagonize, the clergy. Priests, monks, and nuns, as long as they did not challenge the authority of the dictator or cause him unnecessary trouble, were permitted a fair degree of autonomy. Clerical predominance in education was restored. And, the Church began an economic recovery by acquiring real estate through the ploy of ecclesiastic-dominated stock companies. By the end of Díaz' reign in 1911, possibly one-tenth of Mexico's capital was again in the hands of the Catholic Church.²³

Paradoxically, while the Mexican Church was involved in self-aggrandizement, it also evidenced growing social awareness. In May of 1891 Pope Leo XII issued Rerum Novarum in which he called upon Catholics everywhere to aid in finding Christian solutions to the problems of the working classes. The pontiff pledged the Church to help

²² Mecham, Church and State, pp. 374-376.

²³ Ibid., pp. 375-377; Cumberland, Mexico, pp. 236, 239-240.

protect the masses from exploitation. Although this encyclical attracted little immediate attention in Mexico, it eventually resulted in a series of Catholic congresses held during the first decade of the twentieth century.²⁴

During Diaz' reign, Catholics interested in curing Mexico's social ills found many problems with which to concern themselves. Although foreign nationals received special concessions and favored treatment, the dictator evidenced little concern for his own people. Indians were considered a national liability and often were dispossessed of their lands. Wealth became increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small minority, while the poverty of urban and rural workers worsened. Mexico enjoyed peace and prosperity at the expense of the majority of her citizens. Aware of this, participants at the first Mexican Catholic Congress in Puebla in 1903 denounced rural and urban poverty, resolved that landowners should provide substantial benefits for their laborers, decried sub-standard working conditions, and advised the creation of workers' clubs to spread technical knowledge. Subsequent congresses in Morelia (1904), Guadalajara (1906), and Oaxaca (1909) voiced similar sentiments. But, Catholic Social Action amounted to little more than meetings and

²⁴ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 14-15.

speeches while Díaz remained in office.²⁵

Although he had come to power in 1876 under the slogan of "Effective Suffrage and No Reelection," Díaz manipulated Mexican electoral machinery in order to maintain uninterrupted command of Mexico for more than thirty years. Time, advanced age, and his errors finally caught up with him in 1910. Reflecting the growing demand for a significant change in the Mexican political system, Francisco I. Madero, a foreign-educated Coahuilan, issued his Plan of San Luis Potosí. This plan called for the overthrowing of don Porfirio's rule and the holding of free elections. From different parts of Mexico a variety of groups responded to this call, and the Mexican Revolution began. By May, 1911, Díaz was on his way to exile in Europe.²⁶

With the termination of the Porfirato, exponents of Catholic Social Action formed a political party that promised to effect needed reforms. This National Catholic Party joined with many other Mexicans in endorsing Madero's presidential candidacy in 1911. The "Apostle of the

²⁵L. Vincent Padgett, The Mexican Political System (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), p. 20; Robert E. Quirk, The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1910-1929 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp. 17-19; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 16.

²⁶Padgett, The Mexican Political System, pp. 22-23; Francisco Vargas Ruiz, ed., Yo soy mexicano: Lo que todo ciudadano debe saber, 4th ed. (México: Enrique Sainz Editores, 1967), pp. 57, 156-157.

"Revolution" received 99 percent of the votes cast, but these results were deceptive. Madero's term was marked by upheaval. The numerous factions that had united to expel Diaz were led by men with differing philosophies and divergent goals. While some actively sought social justice and/or land reform, others (like Madero) merely desired a more open political system. Still others were mainly concerned with attaining personal power and profits. The lack of cohesiveness among the members of the Revolutionary Family became apparent as various groups disagreed with Madero's policies, became disaffected, and withdrew their support from his government.²⁷

While revolutionary alliances shifted, conservatives consolidated their opposition to the Mexican Revolution. A successful counterrevolution, headed by Victoriano Huerta, ended Madero's presidency and his life in February, 1913. This coup coalesed revolutionary forces which consequently challenged Huerta's reign of violence and terror. Catholic prelates admonished their parishioners to respect Huerta's "legitimate" administration, and the archbishop of Mexico, José Mora y del Río, made a small loan to the usurper. Although the clergy labeled this government legitimate, the

²⁷ Quirk, Mexican Revolution, pp. 25, 28-29; Padgett, The Mexican Political System, p. 23; Charles C. Cumberland, ed., The Meaning of the Mexican Revolution (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1967), pp. vii-viii.

United States refused to accord it recognition. The fierce resistance of revolutionaries led by Venustiano Carranza, plus problems with the United States, caused Huerta to fall from power in 1914.²⁸

With its common enemy defeated, the Revolutionary Family again became embroiled in internal conflicts. Venustiano Carranza, who had pledged to restore the Constitution of 1857, assumed dictatorial control of Mexico. When Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata refused to submit to his authority, two years of civil war ensued. During this period (1914-1916), Carranza's followers revealed their adherence to the anticlericalism of the nineteenth century by looting church treasures and murdering priests. Therefore, when the Constitutionalists succeeded in defeating their opponents, the future did not augur well for the Church in Mexico.²⁹

Carranza did not reinstate the Constitution of 1857 as

²⁸ Padgett, Mexican Political System, pp. 23-24; William Weber Johnson, Heroic Mexico: The Violent Emergence of a Modern Nation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968), pp. 129, 134, 136-137, 139, 389; Quirk, Mexican Revolution, pp. 37-38.

²⁹ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 21-22; Johnson Heroic Mexico, pp. 317, 390; Quirk, Mexican Revolution, pp. 53-59. For concise coverage of the years 1913-1915 and the struggle between Pancho Villa and Venustiano Carranza see Lyle C. Brown's "The Politics of Armed Struggle in the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1915," in James W. Wilkie and Albert L. Michaels, eds., Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval, 1910-1940 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 60-72.

promised. Instead, in 1916 he called a constitutional convention attended only by loyal Carrancistas. Leftists, who managed to sway the assembly, advocated a document that would better the condition of the working classes, effect a more equitable distribution of land, free Mexican resources from foreign domination, and put formidable restraints upon the activities of the army and the Catholic clergy. The distant memory of clerical opposition to the nineteenth-century reform movement and the more recent knowledge of ecclesiastical support of Díaz and Huerta festered in the minds of the more radical Constitutionalists. They chose to forget the Church's positive contributions to Mexican history and its recent concern for social justice. Rather, they remembered the past sins of the clergy. To effect retribution and to prevent the repetition of these sins in the future, the radical delegates at the Querétaro convention sponsored a set of constitutional articles that deprived priests of any and all privileges, removed churchmen from politics, divested the Church of its wealth, and subordinated Church to State in Mexico.³⁰

³⁰ Mecham, Church and State, pp. 384, 389; Callicott, Liberalism in Mexico, p. 271; Alicia Olivera Sedano, Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929: Sus antecedentes y consecuencias (México: Institute Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1966), pp. 59-60; E. V. Niemeyer, Jr., "Anticlericalism in the Mexican Constitutional Convention of 1916-1917," The Americas 11 (1954): 49. Helpful in understanding the motives of the men who compiled the constitution is the two-volume Diario de los debates del

Several of these provisions were similar to those enacted during the Reform Era. Clergymen could not criticize Mexico's laws or government, assemble for political purposes, be judged by special tribunals, or wear clerical garb in public. While freedom of religion was guaranteed, monastic orders were prohibited, as was the holding of religious celebrations outside of church buildings. And, the State was granted the power to intervene as authorized by law in matters of public worship.³¹

Other constitutional articles related to religion were far more extreme than these nineteenth century measures. The Constitution of 1917 deprived religious bodies of any juridical personality and, consequently, of any benefits deriving from corporate identity. It nationalized all church property including buildings used for public worship. The government, if it so desired, could reassign religious buildings for other uses, i.e., libraries, museums, offices, etc. No new houses of worship could be dedicated without prior governmental consent. The person in charge of each church was required to register with the municipal

congreso constituyente, 1916-1917, ediciones de la comisión nacional para la celebración del sesquicentenario de la proclamación de la independencia nacional del cincuentenario de la revolución mexicana (México, 1960).

³¹ Constitución política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 52d ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1973), pp. 8, 11, 18, 100-102.

authorities in his area. Municipal officials were to use this information to maintain an accurate record of the custodian responsible for each temple within their jurisdiction. Religious periodicals could not comment on political affairs, nor could political organizations claim any religious affiliation. Ministers, who must be native Mexicans, were not allowed to vote or hold office. Clergymen could not inherit real wealth except from a close relative. For legal purposes priests were considered to be persons exercising a profession, and as such they were not entitled to any special concessions. Because primary education was to be secularized, no cleric could serve as a teacher or director of any elementary school. Finally, the legislature of each state was authorized to determine the maximum number of ministers of each faith to officiate within that state's borders.³²

When this new constitution was publicized early in 1917, twelve members of the Mexican hierarchy issued a vehement response. They explained that they would submit to the law because they did not condone armed rebellion. But, article by article they criticized and denounced the irreligious sections of the document. The bishops claimed that the Constitution of 1917 violated freedom of association, restricted man's right to regulate his own life,

³² Ibid., pp. 3-7, 22, 41-42, 61, 100-114.

attacked the right of parents to determine their children's education, and infringed upon freedom of teaching. The episcopal protest warned that the new law of the land would ultimately destroy religion in Mexico because it allowed the government to intervene in ecclesiastical affairs, made the Church and its clergy slaves of the State, and sanctioned outright religious persecution.³³

The hierarchy was justified in its apprehensions. Organized Catholicism, as it existed in Mexico in the early twentieth century, was indeed in danger. The Mexican Church with its avowed independence, its worldly priests, and its conservative orientation was incompatible with the type of "enlightened" society that revolutionaries were striving to create. The radical formulators of the 1917 constitution aimed to emasculate the power of the Roman Catholic Church, which they believed to be a medieval, reactionary institution blocking crucial social, economic, and political reforms.

Although composed of Carrancistas, the 1916 constituent assembly had designed legislation too radical to suit the First Chief. Carranza, elected president in 1917, reluctantly accepted the constitution, but he had little intention, if any, of implementing its more extreme

33 Navarrete, Cabarrús a Carranza, pp. 110-114.

provisions. Concerned more with consolidating his own political power than with suppressing the Church, the president even proposed a constitutional amendment to insure greater freedom of worship in Mexico. While this proposal failed to garner support, it did reassure the clergy that their position was fairly secure while Carranza remained in office.³⁴

When his presidential term ended in 1920, Carranza did not intend to relinquish power. Rather, he tried to dictate the choice of his successor and, thereby, maintain an indirect control over Mexican politics. Disgusted by Carranza's machinations, a group of Sonorans rebelled. Their Plan of Agua Prieta, issued on April 23, 1920, named Sonora's Governor Adolfo de la Huerta to be leader of the Liberal Constitutional Army and asked other states to join Sonora in removing Carranza from office. Response to this pronouncement was so immediate and overwhelming that the Mexican congress in mid-May designated de la Huerta as provisional president of Mexico. The success of the rebellion was cemented by Carranza's death later that same month. When a presidential election was held in September, another Sonoran, Alvaro Obregón, was the

³⁴ Parkes, Mexico, p. 363; Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 390; Francis Clement Kelley, Blood-Drenched Altars, rev. ed. (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Bruce Publishing Company, 1936), pp. 266-267.

victorious candidate who assumed the executive office two months later.³⁵

Like the deceased Carranza, Obregón evidenced a tendency to conciliate the Church and gave most of his attention to matters other than the enforcement of the constitution's religious restrictions. He did, however, refuse to overlook an act of clerical defiance that occurred in 1923. In a public ceremony on January 11 at Cubilete Mountain in Guanajuato, forty thousand Mexican Catholics and eleven prelates watched Apostolic Delegate Ernesto Philipi lay the cornerstone for a monument to Christ the King. Faced with this overt violation of the constitution, the president expelled Philipi and instructed the governor of Guanajuato not to allow completion of the monument.³⁶

When the Mexican hierarchy protested the expulsion of the apostolic delegate, Obregón explained that Mexico was acquiring a "modern outlook" in which "effective social programs" were of more consequence than "abstract doctrines." He promised the episcopate that, if they would subscribe to this modernization process, they would "not

³⁵ Parkes, Mexico, pp. 365-366; Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 347.

³⁶ Quirk, Mexican Revolution, pp. 131-135; [Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores], Recuerdo de recuerdos: Autobiografía del excmo. y rdmo. sr. dr. don Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, arzobispo de Morelia y asistente al solio pontificio (México: "Buena Prensa," 1942), pp. 81-82.

encounter any obstacle in carrying out the tenets . . . [their] religion . . . [and would] have the support and sympathy of every Mexican."³⁷ Taking the president at his word, the Holy See in late 1924 declared its intent of filling vacant Mexican sees with clergymen who would concern themselves with spiritual matters rather than political affairs. Pleased by this attitude, the Obregón administration agreed to the Vatican's request that another apostolic delegate be received in Mexico.³⁸

With a few exceptions, then, the Roman Catholic Church and its parishioners in Mexico were able to operate largely without governmental interference from 1917-1924. During this period, zealous laymen revived their Catholic Social Action movement and organized another pro-clerical political party. Existing lay organizations, dedicated to defending the rights of the Church, grew in strength and membership. New Catholic periodicals appeared. With matters progressing so favorably, numerous clergymen who had fled from Mexico during the years of revolution returned from exile. Sizable numbers of foreign

³⁷ William English Walling, The Mexican Question: Mexico and American-Mexican Relations under Calles and Obregón (New York: Robins Press, 1927), pp. 204-205; Callcott, Liberalism in Mexico, p. 295.

³⁸ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 38; Quirk, Mexican Revolution, p. 136.

ecclesiastics remained active within the country. Monastic orders flourished. Religious personnel continued to serve as teachers and directors of primary schools in which traditional doctrines were taught. While the anticlerical sections of the constitution existed only on paper, the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico shrewdly maintained a "prudent silence" and operated much as it had in the past.³⁹

Unfortunately for the Church, this euphoric situation came to an abrupt end. In 1924 a man determined to implement the goals of the "Jacobins of Querétaro" became president of Mexico. When this new executive initiated a policy of strict enforcement of the religious articles of the Constitution of 1917, he forced the clergy and their adherents into action or, rather, reaction.

³⁹ Mecham, Church and State, p. 389; Quirk, Mexican Revolution, pp. 111-112, 120, 126.

CHAPTER II

PLUTARCO ELIAS CALLES

In the Mexican fishing village of Guayamas, Sonora, in 1877, María Jesús de Campuzano gave birth to a male child whom she named after his natural father, Plutarco Elías. When María later married Juan B. Calles, her son assumed his stepfather's surname. The young Plutarco Elías Calles was a virtual "jack of all trades." He worked at various times as a teacher, school inspector, bartender, town treasurer, and flour mill manager. When the Mexican Revolution erupted, Calles identified himself with the Maderistas and began a steady rise in prominence. In 1911 he became police chief of Agua Prieta, where he formed a close relationship with Alvaro Obregón. The two Sonorans joined Carranza in his fight against Victoriano Huerta and in his subsequent power struggle with Pancho Villa. It was Calles who led the forces that inflicted a decisive defeat upon Villa's Division of the North in 1915. With the civil war terminated soon thereafter, Calles returned to his home state where he served as governor from 1915-1919. Upon assuming leadership of the Sonoran government, he pledged to respect the rights of all Mexicans and to replace reactionary institutions with progressive ones.

Expressing his goals in the phrase "Land and Books for All," he vowed that the memory of revolutionaries fallen in battle would inspire him to fulfill his duties and keep his promises.¹

Impressed by Calles' attitudes and actions, Carranza called him to the capital in 1919 to serve as secretary of industry, commerce, and labor. The new secretary distressed the more conservative president, however, by evidencing a strong sympathy and attachment for labor. Disillusionment was mutual. The Sonoran was not pleased by the corruption he observed in the national administration. When Obregón decided to try for the presidency in 1920, Calles resigned his cabinet post in order to support his friend's campaign and resist Carranza's efforts to manipulate the upcoming election. Returning to Sonora as chief of military operations, he collaborated with Governor Adolfo de la Huerta

¹William Weber Johnson, Heroic Mexico: The Violent Emergence of a Modern Nation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968), pp. 372, 378-379; Decretos, circulares y demás disposiciones dictadas por el c. gobernador y comandante militar del estado de Sonora, General Plutarco Elías Calles, durante el año 1915 y algunas otras del gobierno general, relacionadas con aquellas, vol. 1 (Hermosillo, Sonora: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1915), pp. 49. Sources disagree on even the most basic facts of Calles' early life, such as names of parents and date of birth. For varying information on his youth see Arturo García Fomentí, Biografía del señor General Plutarco Elías Calles (México, 1928), p. 3; Juan López de Escalera, Diccionario biográfico y de historia de México (México: Editorial del Magisterio, 1964), p. 141; Fernando Medina Ruiz, Calles: Un destino melancólico (México: Editorial Jus, 1960), p. 11.

on the Plan of Agua Prieta, which was issued in April, 1920. Calles was a major participant in the subsequent rebellion that resulted in Carranza's death, de la Huerta's provisional presidency, and Obregón's accession to the executive office.²

Obregón became president in 1920 on the ticket of the Liberal Constitutional Party, which soon splintered into competing factions. This party disintegration during his term made the determination of Obregón's successor an explosive issue. Both Calles and de la Huerta held cabinet posts and were possible contenders to the succession. In 1923 President Obregón announced his decision to endorse the candidacy of his secretary of gobernación, Plutarco Elías Calles. The disaffected de la Huerta soon became the official candidate of the National Cooperative Party, a conglomeration of groups dissatisfied with the incumbent administration. The breach among the three Sonorans ended in a rebellion that had "anti-agrarian and counter-revolutionary overtones." Although a large percentage of the officers in the Mexican army joined de la Huerta in his fight against the president, Obregón enjoyed the support of the United States government and the loyalty of the labor

²Johnson, Heroic Mexico, pp. 346, 356; L. Vincent Padgett, The Mexican Political System (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), pp. 25, 29.

and agrarian sectors in Mexico. Within less than five months, he managed to suppress the insurrection and exile de la Huerta.³

With peace restored Calles concentrated on his presidential campaign. A tall, powerful man who smoked heavily and rarely smiled, he was not a particularly appealing figure. But, he knew that the Mexican voters were more interested in his political views than in his personal appearance. In his campaign speeches he let the people know his position on vital issues. He promised, if elected, to

establish a purely nationalistic government, uncontrolled by small private cliques and without a spirit of sectarianism, guided in all cases by the ideals and sentiments of the country as represented by the necessities of the majority. . . .⁴

Concerning the Constitution of 1917, he expressed his firm conviction that it "[was] adapted to public necessities in Mexico, and that its honest application . . . [would] aid in a powerful manner to solve our weighty social problems."⁵

³Johnson, Heroic Mexico, pp. 371, 380-382; Padgett, Mexican Political System, pp. 29-30; Ernest Gruening, Mexico and Its Heritage (New York: Century Co., 1929), pp. 107, 145.

⁴Robert Hammond Murray, trans. and comp., Mexico before the World: Public Documents and Addresses of Plutarco Elías Calles (New York: Academy Press, 1927), p. 52; Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 379.

⁵Murray, Documents and Addresses, p. 30.

One of the "weighty" problems that Calles pledged to remedy through his "honest application" of the constitution was that of clergymen who defied Mexico's laws and exploited the Mexican people. While affirming his intent to respect all religions, he declared himself to be "an enemy of the priest politician, of the priest intriguer, of the priest exploiter, [and] of the priest who seeks to keep our people in ignorance. . . ."⁶ This and similar declarations reinforced Calles' already strong image as a sincere revolutionary and, consequently, won him the approval of a large segment of the Mexican population.

Despite his popularity, Calles was opposed in the 1924 election. Commercial interests, various hacendados, and staunch Catholics--groups which felt threatened by Calles' campaign promises--undersigned the candidacy of Angel Flores of Sinaloa. Lawyer-geologist Nicolás Zúñiga y Miranda was also on the ballot, and not for the first time. Nicknamed the "eternal candidate," Zúñiga had run for the presidency against Díaz, Madero, Carranza, and Obregón. When the results of the election were tallied, Zúñiga, the "eternal" loser, received hardly enough votes to deserve mention. The more successful Angel Flores garnered approximately 250,000 votes. Calles with a reported 1,340,634 votes scored an overwhelming victory. Consequently, on

⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

December 1 before a crowd of thirty thousand countrymen, Plutarco Elías Calles was inaugurated as president of Mexico for the term 1924-1928.⁷

Like many of his predecessors, the new president discovered that serious internal and external problems demanded his immediate attention and delayed the fulfillment of his campaign promises. In 1924 the condition of the Mexican treasury was critical. Realizing that economic matters must be given top priority, Calles concentrated on improving the country's financial situation. He removed unsatisfactory governmental employees, placed the national fiscal system more completely in the hands of the State, and founded a National Banking Commission. These measures gradually enabled the government to balance the budget, pay some of its domestic debts, and resume formerly suspended payments on the foreign debt. With this steady improvement in the Mexican economy, the president was able to sponsor road building programs, sanitation measures, expanded irrigation systems, improved public education, and the professionalization of the army.⁸

⁷ Alicia Olivera Sedano, Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929: Sus antecedentes y consecuencias (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1966), p. 98; Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 385.

⁸ Frank Brandenburg, The Making of Modern Mexico (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 4, 207, 216, 259, 298; Padgett, Mexican Political System, p. 31; Gruening, Mexico, p. 107.

Proclaiming himself the intellectual heir of Emiliano Zapata, Calles, while president, distributed a total of almost eight million acres of land to some fifteen hundred villages. To enable the villagers to exploit their new lands effectively, his government organized agricultural cooperatives and a National Agricultural Bank. Because he favored the urban worker even more than the rural peasant, he appointed labor leaders to important governmental positions. Calles made Luis N. Morones, his close confidant and head of the powerful Confederación Regional de Obreros Mexicanos, his secretary of industry, commerce, and labor. Morones aided the president in formulating programs to improve the living and working conditions of the Mexican wage earner. While his policies occasionally angered agrarianists who felt themselves relegated to a position of secondary importance behind labor, Calles' earnest efforts to help the rural and urban proletariat earned for him a broad base of support among the rank and file of Mexican citizenry.⁹

Calles' popular appeal, while strong within his home-land, did not extend into the United States. Relations between Mexico and her northern neighbor were strained over

⁹ Henry Bamford Parkes, A History of Mexico, Sentry Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), p. 382; Padgett, Mexican Political System, p. 30; Charles C. Cumberland, Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 296.

the former's lack of payment on her external debts, the problem of reparations for damaged or confiscated properties owned by United States nationals in Mexico, and the question of Mexican subsoil rights. Of these three issues, the last had caused much disagreement between the two countries since the formulation of the Constitution of 1917. Specifically, Article 27 claimed the ownership of subsoil mineral rights for the Mexican nation. By threatening the interests of United States oil companies in Mexico, this constitutional provision created a serious diplomatic crisis. Matters worsened in 1925 when the Mexican legislature adopted a new Petroleum Code unfavorable to foreign investors.¹⁰ Resultant tension between Mexico and the United States was, then, another factor that prevented Calles from turning his attention to his proposed campaign of constitutional enforcement.

While Calles' initial energies as president were directed largely toward achieving financial stability, aiding the Mexican proletariat, and bettering U.S.-Mexican relations, he did not ignore Mexico's religious problems. Early in his term he became involved in an attempt to supplant the Roman Catholic faith in Mexico and replace it with an organized religion subordinate to the State.

¹⁰Brandenburg, Modern Mexico, p. 72; Padgett, Mexican Political System, p. 31.

While Calles was not personally responsible for the creation of the Mexican Apostolic Church, he and Secretary Morones apparently gave at least tacit approval to the movement. The first news of the schismatic church appeared on February 18 in a manifesto signed by three priests, Joaquín Pérez, Manuel Luis Monge, and Angel Jiménez. The three men disavowed papal authority and announced the establishment of a new religious sect that abolished clerical vows of celibacy, did away with tithing, and provided for the ministering of the sacraments without charge. Because the Mexican Apostolic clergy needed a place in which to conduct their services, Monge on February 21 forced Roman Catholic priest Alejandro Silva to turn over his church, la Soledad, to the schismatics. But, two days later when Monge attempted to offer Mass at la Soledad, he was mobbed by Silva's irate parishioners. Policemen and firemen were called to restore order. During the disturbances which recurred throughout the day, approximately fifteen hundred enraged Roman Catholics protested the seizure of the church building.¹¹

¹¹David C. Bailey, ¡Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1974), p. 52; Antonio Ríus Facius, La juventud católica y la revolución mexicana, 1910-1925 (México: Editorial Jus, 1963), pp. 274-276; Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 391; Excelsior (Mexico City), 20 February 1925; 24 February 1925.

This active opposition forced Pérez, the patriarch of the Mexican Apostolic Church, and Monge to appeal to the civil authorities for assistance. According to the Constitution of 1917 which nationalized all church property, the federal government was empowered to dispose of buildings used for purposes of public worship. The two clergymen consequently asked Calles to confirm their right to practice their religion in la Soledad. The president replied:

Received your message yesterday. Instructions have already been given for you to receive necessary guarantees.¹²

On the following day the Mexican newspaper Excelsior reported that by express presidential disposition la Soledad had been entrusted to the schismatics.¹³

The threat posed by the schismatic movement ended the "prudent silence" observed by the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico since 1917. The archbishop of Mexico suspended the ecclesiastic licenses of the three priests involved and proclaimed his confidence that the Mexican people would remain faithful to their ancestral religion. He warned that anyone who repudiated papal authority was no longer a Catholic. Therefore, clergymen who associated with the new

¹² Excelsior, 25 February 1925; Ríus Facius, La juventud, pp. 276-277. Translations in the text from Spanish into English are those of the author.

¹³ Excelsior, 25 February 1925.

cult and preached its heretical doctrines were subject to excommunication. Likewise, laymen could be excommunicated if they attended services presided over by these false priests, received sacraments from a non-Catholic cleric, or sent their children to be educated in a faith other than Roman Catholicism. Archbishop José Mora y del Río's warnings left no doubt that the Roman Catholic Church completely anathematized the Mexican Apostolic movement.¹⁴

As the archbishop predicted, most Catholics--cleric and lay--resisted the lure of the Mexican Apostolic Church. On February 26 the priests of Mexico City met to declare their allegiance to the Vatican. Similar declarations were made by faithful clergymen throughout the country. Loyal laymen continued their resistance to the presence of the Mexican Apostolic clergy at la Soledad and worked to prevent the schismatics from establishing themselves in any other Roman Catholic churches. The government, faced with this tense situation, retired la Soledad from use as a place of public worship. Pérez then requested that he and his flock be assigned another temple. A cautious secretary of gobernación, hoping to avoid a repetition of the events at la Soledad, instructed him to choose from among former churches not then in use. The patriarch's choice, the

¹⁴ Excelsior, 20 February 1925; 26 February 1925; Ríus Faciús, La juventud, pp. 277-278.

Church of Corpus Christi, became the "Holy See" for the Mexican Apostolic faith. But, in their new headquarters, as in their old, Pérez, Monge, and Jiménez failed to win an appreciable number of converts.¹⁵

The establishment of the Mexican Apostolic Church not only failed to supplant Roman Catholicism in Mexico but also had an opposite effect. Orthodox Catholics, viewing the schismatic movement as but the first step in an organized governmental plot against their Church, rallied in active defense of the Roman Catholic faith. Three concerned laymen, René Capistrán Garza, Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, and Luis G. Bustos, revived a long-discussed but never-implemented project that called for the formation of a civic religious defense league to combat governmental actions and to rid the constitution of its "injustices and tyrannies." At the instigation of these three young men, representatives of various Mexican Catholic societies, such as the powerful Asociación Católica de la Juventud Mexicana (ACJM) and the Knights of Columbus, convened in Mexico City on March 9, 1925, to discuss the proposition and unanimously approve it. The delegates present then began the task of structuring

¹⁵ Excelsior, 25 February 1925; 27 February 1925; Alberto María Carreño, Páginas de historia mexicana: (Pages of Mexican History), Colección de obras diversas, vol. 3 (Mexico: Ediciones Victoria, 1936), p. 47; Rius Facius, La juventud, p. 281; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 53-54.

the new league and composing a manifesto to explain its purpose and program. This manifesto, completed and adopted at a second meeting on March 12, was dispatched to the local branches of the various Catholic associations to obtain their support.¹⁶

The March manifesto announced the creation of the Liga Nacional de Defensa Religiosa (LNDR), an organization dedicated to securing religious freedom in Mexico. A new, distinct body with its own specific ends, the League was not merely a confederation of already existing Catholic societies, although it would receive their support. The major function of the new association was to seek the reform of articles of the Constitution of 1917 that violated the rights of Mexican Catholics and the Church. Significantly, the LNDR assumed full responsibility for its own actions. The Roman Catholic episcopate, although it might counsel the League, was not involved in the organization's formation or its activities.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ríus Facius, La juventud, pp. 282-283; Alberto María Carreño, El arzobispo de México: Excmo. sr. dr. don Pascual Díaz y el conflicto religioso, 2d ed. rev. (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1943), p. 17.

¹⁷ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 54-55; Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, pp. 111-112. The word league, when capitalized, refers specifically to the National League of Religious Defense, created in March, 1925.

While zealous Catholics welcomed the news of the creation of the League, other Mexicans reacted adversely. Expressing the views of the government, Secretary of Gobernación Gilberto Valenzuela reminded everyone concerned that the Constitution of 1917 specifically prohibited political organizations from having religious affiliation. That the League was political was apparent, he claimed, from its program of protecting the rights of Mexican Catholics and seeking legal reforms. Furthermore, the very name of the new association testified as to its religious character. Therefore, Valenzuela concluded, the LNDR was extralegal and seditious. As spokesman for the new society, René Capistrán Garza publicly answered Valenzuela's charges. He explained that for many years religious rights in Mexico had been abused. Catholics, their patience exhausted, finally had acted in self defense and established the League, a civic association. While denying that the LNDR was a political body, Garza acknowledged that at times it might have to act in the political arena, because "the religious question in Mexico is [a] political question." Unswayed by Capistrán Garza's arguments, Secretary Valenzuela instructed state governors and military commanders throughout Mexico to watch closely the activities of the LNDR, to prevent infractions of Article 130 of the

constitution, and to maintain public order.¹⁸

This tense atmosphere was momentarily lessened by the arrival on April 1 of the new apostolic delegate to Mexico, Serafin Cimino. Cimino seemed anxious to conciliate the government and announced his intention to respect Mexican laws. His moderate attitude displeased members of the episcopate who felt no compulsion to respect legislation which they believed to be unjust, persecutory, and irreligious. Just two days after the apostolic delegate's arrival, José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate, the fiery bishop of Huejutla, issued a pastoral letter. Emphatically stating that he recognized only papal authority, the bishop denied that the State had any right to intervene in ecclesiastical affairs. He insisted that "constitutional laws, organic laws, or others of whatever denomination, contradictory to divine or ecclesiastical laws . . . [were not] of any value." When Archbishop Mora indicated that Manríquez had voiced the general sentiments of the Mexican hierarchy, Cimino found himself in an awkward position. Presumably for reasons of health, he left Mexico in May for a visit to the United States and was gone for several weeks. Upon preparing to return, he

¹⁸ Ríus Facius, La juventud, p. 284; Olivera Sedano, Conflictos religiosos, pp. 113, 115. Article 130 contained several provisions related to the Church and clergy. For the full text of Article 130, see appendix.

was informed by the Mexican authorities that President Calles preferred he not reenter the country. And, under these circumstances, Cimino resigned as apostolic delegate to Mexico.¹⁹

Disagreement among Roman Catholic officials over the posture they should adopt in regard to Church-State affairs was not to be an isolated occurrence. Although the Mexican bishops and archbishops submitted to the authority of the papacy, at times some of them personally disapproved of specific policies of the Vatican and/or its representatives. Furthermore, the Church in Mexico from 1925-1936 was anything but unanimous in its own opinions. While the hierarchy occasionally assumed an official position on critical issues, there were usually dissenters. The Mexican episcopate encompassed men of a temperate disposition, men of a pragmatic bent, and men, like Mánriquez y Zárate, who did not hesitate to vocalize their hostility to the government. For this varied group to agree upon statements of principle or courses of action was often difficult and sometimes impossible. The lack of uniformity among Church leaders was usually evident to the Mexican people and often made it difficult for even the most stalwart Catholics to know how to proceed.

¹⁹ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 57-58; Ríus Faciús, La juventud, p. 301.

While the Church's official position on religious affairs in Mexico was occasionally ambiguous, Calles' position was not. In his first annual presidential message to Congress on September 1, 1925, he censured the Catholic clergy for having encouraged their followers to take justice into their own hands at the time of the seizure of la Soledad. He also condemned the March manifesto of the LNDR for containing language disrespectful to the laws and government of Mexico. Stressing that the policy of his administration was "to respect all religious creeds; but invariably to demand respect for the laws and the authorities," Calles reminded Congress that Secretary Valenzuela had ordered the strict enforcement of Article 130 of the constitution.²⁰

Members of the rapidly growing LNDR were contemptuous of Calles' pledge to respect all religions and alarmed by his policy of enforcing Article 130. Viewing the government as "Bolshevik" in orientation and noting a rising Protestant influence in Mexico, they feared that their co-religionists might become indoctrinated and desert their faith. Concerned laymen decided to appeal to the

²⁰ Informes rendidos por el c. Gral. Plutarco Elías Calles presidente constitucional de la unión, ante el h. congreso de la unión, los días 1 de septiembre de 1925 y 1 de septiembre de 1926 y contestación de los c. c. presidentes del citado congreso (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1925?), pp. 12-14.

Holy See to aid them in their endeavors to mobilize the Mexican population in defense of the Church. Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra and his League associate, Gabriel Fernández Somellera, went to Rome in September to provide the pope with a "true" picture of conditions in their country and to convince him of the need for immediate, decisive action. Representing several Catholic societies in Mexico, the two men warned Pius XI that the greatest dangers to Mexican Catholicism were the recent application of the anticlerical constitution and the lack of papal guidance to the Mexican people. They advised that His Holiness could remedy the second of these problems and help to counteract the first by taking certain decisive steps: (1) shaping the conscience of the people by providing norms to regulate their behavior, (2) exhorting all Mexican Catholics to live up to their religious responsibilities, and (3) advising the Mexican hierarchy to offer unified support to the endeavors of those laymen acting in the Church's behalf.²¹

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David C. Bailey, "The Cristero Rebellion and the Religious Conflict in Mexico, 1926-1929" (Ph. D. diss., Michigan State University, 1969), p. 77; Gabriel Fernández Somellera and Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra to Pope Pius XI, 18 September 1925, reel 44, Archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty. The League's archive is on microfilm in the Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as LA followed by microfilm reel number).

While the Mexican lay representatives advised the pope to act, his secretary of state, Pietro Gasparri, warned him that the Church in Mexico could not hope to win in a direct confrontation with the State. Apparently heeding Gasparri's warning, Pius XI determined to move cautiously and, if possible, avoid a clash with the Calles administration. Nevertheless, he realized that the prevalent mood among the priesthood and devout laity in Mexico was a militant one and that both groups were openly critical of the Mexican government and its laws. Fearing that the Mexican population as a whole might view this Catholic behavior in an unfavorable manner and consequently turn against the Church, the pope on September 22 addressed a message to the youth of Mexico. He reminded them that it was the duty of the episcopate, the lower clergy, and laymen to defend their God and their religion. The clergy when they championed the sacred rights of the Church were doing religious, not political, work. Their actions seemed to be political only because in Mexico "politics has touched the altar, [it] has touched religion. . . ." This situation, Pius XI assured, was the fault of the government and not of the Church.²²

²² Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 59; Eduardo Iglesia and Rafael Martínez del Campo [Aguiles P. Moctezuma], El Conflicto religioso de 1926: Sus origines.

Looking to the Vatican for strong action rather than pacific justifications, the Mexican hierarchy delegated the archbishop of Durango, José María González Valencia, and the bishop of San Luis Potosí, Miguel de la Mora y Mora, to convince the papacy of the seriousness of the Church's predicament in Mexico. In a letter to Pius XI in November and in a subsequent audience with him in December, the two prelates cited the many violations of the rights of the Church and its parishioners from 1920-1925. They then assured the Holy Father that petitions and protests had not ameliorated the government's persecutory attitude. The best alternative for the Mexican Church, the bishops argued, was reliance on committed laymen. They asked Pius XI to appeal to Mexican Catholics to support their religion. Exercising caution, however, the pope initially limited himself to making a brief statement on the Mexican situation in December of 1925 and praising the faith of the Mexican people in January of 1926.²³

Even though he wanted to avoid a clash between Church and State in Mexico, Pius XI did not ignore the reports

Su desarrollo. Su solución., 2d ed., 2 vols. (México: Editorial Jus, 1960), 2:379.

²³Francis Patrick Dooley, "The Cristeros, Calles and Mexican Catholicism" (Ph. D. diss., University of Maryland, 1972), p. 83; Bailey, "Cristero Rebellion," pp. 77-78.

and advice of the four men in Rome who represented the clergy and laymen of Mexico. The obvious need for a papal statement on the religious situation in Mexico led him to direct a letter to the Mexican episcopate on February 2, 1926. In this missive the pope denounced the anti-Catholic attitude of the government and criticized Calles' treatment of former Apostolic Delegate Serafin Cimino. Noting that adherents of the Mexican Apostolic Church enjoyed many liberties, he bemoaned the fact that Roman Catholics who remained true to their religion were treated as enemies of the State. The Holy Father conceded that the Church in Mexico was being oppressed by measures that did not deserve to be called laws because they were not based on reason. Nevertheless, he instructed the episcopate not to participate in politics nor to permit the founding of any political party with a Catholic name. Pius XI explained that he did not want the Church's enemies to have any excuse to label Catholicism as a political force; for, this would only strengthen the already rampant anti-clericalism in Mexico. The clergy could and should work with disciplined organization to foster Catholic Action among laymen. The pope advised churchmen to inform Mexican Catholics as to what was "good" for Mexico and to encourage them to work actively to achieve that "good."²⁴

²⁴Pope Pius XI to José Mora y del Río, archbishop of

Before this papal letter reached Mexico, a series of events began that ultimately led to the Church-State confrontation long-dreaded by Pius XI. On January 27 Ignacio Monroy, an overly ambitious member of the press, published in El Universal a copy of the original episcopal protest against the Mexican constitution in 1917. He included in his article comments made at that time by Archbishop Mora y del Río to the effect that clergymen and laymen would inaugurate a campaign to work for the reform of anticlerical laws. These remarks were presented as if they represented the current sentiments of the archbishop. When Mora repudiated this press release, Monroy faced dismissal from his paper. The worried reporter visited the archbishop who, during the course of the interview, acknowledged that truth was unchangeable and that the principles embodied within the 1917 episcopal document remained firm. Reporting on these statements in El Universal on February 4, Monroy implied that his earlier story about an upcoming Catholic campaign to achieve constitutional reform was indeed accurate.²⁵

Mexico, and other archbishops and bishops, 2 February 1926, LA:43.

²⁵ John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1916-1936 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), p. 301; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 62; John Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America: A History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations, rev. ed.

The following day Adalberto Tejeda, who had replaced Valenzuela as secretary of gobernación, labeled Mora's recent words seditious and declared that the government would see that its laws were respected. Tejeda forwarded the 1917 episcopal protest and the controversial newspaper pieces to the attorney general, so that appropriate charges could be brought against the archbishop. Dismayed by the government's attitude, members of the LNDR circulated copies of the 1917 document, which an indignant episcopate--while denying rebellious intent--publicly endorsed on February 8. Meanwhile, Mora protested his innocence, demanded an immediate hearing, and denied that the clergy intended to combat the constitution. At the same time, Monroy maintained that his reports were correct, and El Universal announced that it would continue to investigate the whole affair. Charged with having publicly criticized the policy of the Mexican government, Mora was tried in a Mexico City District Court, which in late February dismissed charges against the archbishop. Ironically, this decision came too late to ease the growing tension between Church and State in Mexico.²⁶

(Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 391.

²⁶ Alfonso Toro, La iglesia y el estado en México (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1927), pp. 402-403; Mecham, Church and State, pp. 391-392; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 63; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," Current History 24 (1926): 116 (hereafter cited CH)

Calles, unwilling to await the results of Mora's hearing or El Universal's investigation, proceeded with the belief that Mexican Catholics were actively conspiring against the government. He decided to fulfill his campaign promise of an "honest application" of the constitution, at least with regard to its religious provisions. Informed of the president's decision, members of the Mexican cabinet from February 10 to February 17 initiated a series of measures directed against church-held properties, alien religious personnel, convents and monasteries, and private elementary schools. The attorney general moved to nationalize all church property not already in the possession of the State. He also informed the press that foreign clergy active in Mexico would be deported not only because they exercised the ministry in direct violation of the constitution, but also because they had interfered in Mexican politics. The government additionally ordered the closing of all schools, orphanages, and convents where religious instruction was offered. Secretary Tejeda announced a short time later that all convents and monasteries were to be closed. To insure that Calles's new policy of constitutional enforcement would go into effect at all levels, Tejeda advised the governors of the various Mexican state to take the necessary steps to implement Articles 3, 5, and

130 of the Constitution of 1917.²⁷

Charging the Calles administration with religious persecution, enraged Catholics sometimes attempted to prevent the closing of Church-sponsored institutions or the deportation of foreign religious. In Mexico City on February 23, for example, services at a major cathedral were interrupted when government agents arrested two allegedly Spanish priests. Incensed parishioners subsequently held a protest demonstration in front of Tejeda's office. Police reserves and firemen, called to dispel the mob, clashed with the demonstrators. Several civilians were killed or wounded.²⁸ This and similar instances of militant Catholic resistance to governmental policy, however, did not deter Calles from his chosen course of action.

In an interview appearing in the New York Herald Tribune on February 23, Calles defended himself and his subordinates from charges of religious persecution. He explained that foreign religious personnel had ignored repeated warnings that they were violating the constitution and insisted that his government finally had had no recourse but to expel violators of Mexico's fundamental

²⁷ Mecham, Church and State, pp. 390-393; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 24:116; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 64. Article 3 secularized primary education and prohibited clergymen from establishing or directing elementary schools. Article 5 banned monastic orders.

²⁸ Hackett, "Mexico," CH 24:117.

laws. Calles concluded by offering assurances that alien priests who did not practice the ministry would be permitted to remain in Mexico as private citizens. The question, as Calles saw it, was a simple matter of obedience to the constitution, not governmental persecution of religion.²⁹

Three days after this presidential statement appeared in the press, the Mexican secretary of education issued new regulations governing privately owned and operated educational institutions. Private elementary schools could not offer religious courses, be connected with any ecclesiastical body, have clerical staff or directors, or show religious pictures or adornments. To insure compliance with these new rules, private institutions offering primary education were required to register with the Department of Education within sixty days and provide information as to ownership, sources of revenue, and religious affiliation. Before this registration period ended, however, the Education Ministry not only received numerous protests from Catholic sources but also realized that the closing of many private schools would create a serious void in the Mexican educational system. Consequently, the secretary of education announced that private primary schools could

²⁹New York Herald Tribune, 25 February 1926, in Murray, Documents and Addresses, pp. 103-104.

continue to operate if their administrators and teachers would cease imparting religious education, adopt secular names, and subject themselves to official supervision. Later, even these regulations were suspended to allow time for needed talks between education officials and the principals of the institutions involved. Finally, the Education Department issued a decree on April 24 which stated that no private elementary school could connect with religious buildings, offer religious instruction, or have clerical personnel. Schools complying with these rules and registering with the government could remain in operation. However, primary schools which did not comply were to be closed.³⁰

The Church in Mexico came under attack at the state as well as national level during the spring of 1926. While the Constitution of 1917 had empowered each state legislature to determine according to local needs the number of clergymen to be allowed to officiate within that state, relatively few had exercised this prerogative until Calles and Tejeda encouraged them to do so in 1926. One notable exception was Tabasco, controlled by a rabid anticlerical, Tomás Garrido Canabal. With Garrido Canabal's encouragement, the Tabascan legislature in March of 1925 not only had

³⁰Hackett, "Mexico," CH 24:117, 448; Mecham, Church and State, p. 394.

refused to allow more than six ministers of any faith to serve within the state but also had required these authorized ministers to be least forty years old, to be of good moral antecedents, and to be married. These measures had virtually eliminated the Roman Catholic Church from Tabasco by 1926.³¹

Early in 1926 when Calles inaugurated his campaign of enforcing the religious provisions of the constitution, several Mexican states finally began to restrict clerical numbers, although in a more moderate manner than Tabasco had done. In February the legislature in Colima enacted a law permitting only twenty-six clergymen of any given faith, and Nayarit restricted the number of authorized priests to forty. In March four other states enacted similar laws. With a few qualifications only one minister per faith was allotted to each municipality in San Luis Potosí. Michoacán limited itself to 96 ministers for each cult, Tamaulipas to 12, and Jalisco to 250. Before these restrictive measures were passed, there were approximately 150 active Catholic clergymen in Colima, 90 in Nayarit, 100 in San Luis Potosí, 620 in Michoacán, 40 in Tamaulipas, and

³¹ Alan M. Kirshner, "Tomás Garrido Canabal and the Mexican Red Shirt Movement" (Ph. D. diss., New York University, 1970), pp. 27-28.

800 in Jalisco.³² Therefore, the laws passed by these six states in early 1926--as well as later measures limiting clerical numbers in other states--drastically reduced the number of legally authorized Catholic priests in Mexico.

Anti-Catholic action by federal and state authorities elicited protests from the more outspoken members of the Mexican hierarchy. In a March 10 pastoral entitled "Viva Cristo Rey," José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate openly "reprove[d], condemn[ed], and anathematize[d] each and every one of the crimes and assaults committed by the Mexican Government against the Catholic Church. . . ."³³ Because of this pastoral letter, Bishop Manríquez was charged with opposing the government's decision to demand obedience to the constitution and was ordered to appear for trial in mid-April. When he ignored the court order, the bishop was arrested, tried, convicted, and kept under house arrest for several months.³⁴

Leopoldo Lara y Torres, the bishop of Tacámbaro, was another prelate who did not hesitate to express his

³² Jesús García Gutiérrez [Félix Navarrettel], De Cabarrús a Carranza: La legislación anticatólica en México (México: Editorial Jus, 1957), pp. 132-133, 136-140; Carreño, Historia mexicana, pp. 361-362.

³³ Gruening, Mexico, p. 276.

³⁴ Robert E. Quirk, The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1910-1929 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp. 157-158; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 24:448.

opposition to the government. In a memorial dated March 16 he protested the closing of seminaries, convents, schools, and orphanages; the expulsion of foreign religious; and the numerous violations of the civil liberties of Mexican Catholics. Lara charged that government agents, while closing Catholic institutions, committed atrocities against nuns, children, and elderly and sick persons. After presenting these charges, Lara made three requests. He asked the Calles' administration to reform objectionable articles of the constitution, the officials of Michoacán to reconsider their recent law allowing only ninety-six priests for the state, and Catholic citizens to work untiringly within legal bounds to obtain "Religión, Unión, [e] Independencia." Later, on March 26 Lara directed a pastoral letter to the clergy and laity of his diocese, because he feared that Michoacán's law restricting clerical numbers would interfere with the ability of the people to practice their religion. He authorized priests to administer the sacraments in private homes and granted laymen permission in the absence of a clergyman to perform basic rites such as baptism. While making these special concessions to the faithful of Michoacán, Lara y Torres again admonished his parishioners to organize peacefully in support of the Church. He advised them to cast their votes at the polls for those candidates who agreed to respect Catholic interests. Although the

bishop called for passive, legal resistance to the government, he warned that he condemned armed movements and that it would never be acceptable for Catholics "to resort to rebellion." Like Manríquez y Zárate, Lara y Torres through his writings alienated Mexican civil authorities. Charged with having libeled the government, he was ordered to stand trial in April.³⁵

During the same month (March) that Manríquez y Zárate and Lara y Torres issued their controversial pastoral letters, yet another apostolic delegate arrived in Mexico. Because he realized that his arrival was poorly timed, Archbishop George Caruana, a naturalized U.S. citizen, endeavored to maintain a low profile. While making no strong public statements, however, he privately approved of the Mexican hierarchy's attitude of resistance to the government. Feeling that the critical Church-State situation in 1926 called for clerical unity, he sponsored the formation of an Episcopal Committee to represent and speak for the episcopate as a whole. Archbishop Mora y del Río was selected to head this committee and Pascual Díaz

³⁵ Leopoldo Lara y Torres to Plutarco Elías Calles, 16 March 1926, and Leopoldo Lara y Torres to the clergy and faithful of his diocesis, 26 March 1926, in Leopoldo Lara y Torres, Documentos para la historia de la persecución religiosa en México de Mons. Leopoldo Lara y Torres: Primer obispo de Tacámbaro, ed. Salvador Abascal (México: Editorial Jus, 1954), pp. 91-105, 106-118; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 24:448.

y Barreto, the bishop of Tabasco, became its secretary. Before his expulsion by the Calles regime in May, the apostolic delegate also requested that the Liga Nacional de Defensa Religiosa change its name to the Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa (LNDLR). The organization complied with Caruana's request.³⁶

Even as the Calles administration worked to enforce the religious provisions of the constitution, the Mexican hierarchy endeavored to block the government's efforts and to secure constitutional reform. On February 2, 1926, Pius XI had instructed the clergy of Mexico to abstain from direct participation in politics and had counseled them to encourage Catholics to organize in support of the Church. In accord with these instructions, the Mexican episcopate on April 21 addressed an appeal to the Mexican people. They explained that the Church was a spiritual, supernatural organism that acknowledged no superior and permitted no one to interfere with its doctrines. The prelates asserted that the present government was violating the sacred rights of the Church to teach freely her dogma, to administer the

³⁶ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 67-68; Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, p. 119; Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, pp. 16-17. Hereafter in the text LNDLR will be used instead of LNDR to refer to the Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa.

sacraments with complete independence, and to possess the temporal goods necessary to achieve her ends. Because the Church was over and above political partyism, it left to laymen the exercising of political action. And, the bishops declared, a major duty incumbent upon the faithful in Mexico was that of working within legal bounds to insure that religious rights were respected. Asking their followers to seek crucial constitutional reforms, the episcopate assured that political action by Catholics was not rebellion against the State, but rather the "just defense of legitimate rights."³⁷

Unable to achieve their goals directly, the Mexican hierarchy asked their followers to act in their behalf and relied upon the faithful to serve as champions of the Church. The upper clergy determined what needed to be done for the "good" of Mexico, informed their parishioners to that effect, and awaited the desired results. To the episcopate what was good for the Roman Catholic Church was good for Mexico. Calles violently disagreed with the hierarchy over what was good for Mexico, and he failed to appreciate their distinction between direct and indirect political participation. As far as the president was

³⁷ Mexican episcopate to the nation, 21 April 1926, fondo XV, "Conflictos religiosos, 1910-1929," carpeta 1, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Departamento Cultural de Condumex, S.A., México, D.F.

concerned, the bishops by encouraging Mexicans to resist governmental policies and laws were entering into politics. The document that the episcopate most forcefully opposed--the Constitution of 1917--made their actions illegal; for, it clearly stated that no cleric could associate with others for political purposes or criticize Mexico's laws and government. Herein lay the irony of the Church's situation. There was no legal means by which churchmen could express their views. When they advocated legal reforms or protested the actions of the Calles regime, technically they were violating the Mexican constitution. Choosing to adhere to technicalities, Calles met the challenge flung at him by the Catholic clergy. He became more determined than ever to enforce the constitutional measures repugnant to the Church. This decision helped to precipitate one of the most serious Church-State crises in the history of the Mexican nation.

CHAPTER III

THE WITHDRAWAL

On the seventh of January 1926, the Mexican Congress at the president's request ceded to him special power to reform the country's penal code. Calles used this power to formulate a law containing thirty-three articles that provided strict and specific penalties for infractions of constitutional provisions related to matters of religion and religious discipline. The decrees defined penalties for non-Mexicans serving in the ministry, clergymen acting as teachers, ecclesiastics wearing religious garb out-of-doors, primary schools offering religious instruction, religious periodicals commenting on political affairs, and political organizations maintaining any sectarian affiliation. Also, several articles were aimed at the "priest politician" detested by Calles. Churchmen who criticized the fundamental laws of Mexico could be imprisoned for one to five years. Ministers associating for political purposes were liable to both arrest and fine. Individuals who in the exercise of the ministry incited disobedience to the government were subject to a possible six-year term in prison. Additionally, all priests in charge of church buildings were required to register with the presidents of

their respective municipalities within thirty days or incur both a five hundred peso fine and a fifteen-day jail sentence. Calles and Secretary of Gobernación Adalberto Tejeda signed this "Law Reforming the Penal Code of the Federal District . . . and Applying to the Entire Nation in Cases of Offenses against the Federation" in mid-June, but it did not go into effect until July 31. In the interim copies of the decree were posted on the doors of the churches in Mexico.¹

This decree aroused the wrath of several of the Catholic societies in Mexico. Leaders of the Asociación Católica de Juventud Mexicana declared that they could not "remain dumb in the face of . . . religious persecution." Manuel de Lapeza, acting head of the Knights of Columbus, insisted that "intelligent people" must protest this attack upon the Church. The Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa convened a junta which discussed the attitude that Mexican Catholics should assume with regard to Calles' Law. By early July League directors formulated a plan to effect a boycott to paralyze the economic and social life of Mexico until the government ceased oppressing

¹Diario Oficial (Mexico City), 30 January 1926; 2 July 1926. Copies of this measure, known as Calles' Law, may be found in Robert Hammond Murray, trans. and comp., Mexico before the World: Public Documents and Addresses of Plutarco Elías Calles (New York: Academy Press, 1927), pp. 133, 141; Diario Oficial, 2 July 1926; Excelsior (Mexico City), 3 July 1926.

the Church. Before implementing this project, LNDLR leadership consulted the Roman Catholic hierarchy, which carefully considered the boycott proposal. The Episcopal Committee decided that it was "worthy of full praise" and recommended that both the clergy and laity of Mexico cooperate in this laudable enterprise. After receiving this strong clerical endorsement, the League by means of a circular dated July 14 formally announced the boycott, effective as of July 31. Loyal Catholics were asked to support the movement by purchasing only necessities, restricting their social activities, refraining from using public transportation, limiting their use of electricity, and preventing their children from attending lay schools.²

Dismissing the boycott as "ridiculous," Calles in a press statement expressed his confidence that it would not have any lasting effect on the Mexican economy. Nevertheless, he condemned the promoters of the movement for their willingness "to drag the citizens down to poverty . . . under the banner of Catholicism, to satisfy old grudges and

² New York Times, 5 July 1926, p. 1; 18 July 1926, p. 21; Charles W. Hackett, "The Church and State Conflict in Mexico," Current History 24(1926):834 (hereafter cited as CH); Circular 2A, Directive Committee of LNDLR, 14 July 1926, reel 44, Archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin Texas (hereafter cited as LA followed by the microfilm reel number).

and bastard political ambitions." The president charged that reactionary "Catholic political leaders and bad priests" were using the Mexican religious problem as an excuse to interfere with the working of the revolutionary government. This, rather than religious persecution, explained the present upheaval in Mexico. Referring to the controversial articles published in El Universal early in the year, Calles insisted that the Catholic hierarchy had repudiated the constitution. While declaring that his administration would continue to enforce existing religious regulations, the president maintained that neither his actions nor those of his subordinates were "animated by rancor or ill-will or any desire to persecute the Archbishops or the Bishops who signed the manifesto against the Constitution and who sought to excite the people to rebellion. . . ."³

Although the president labeled the boycott a ridiculous scheme, members of the LNDLR and ACJM took it seriously. They enthusiastically circulated leaflets advocating popular participation in economic warfare against the State. Policemen, maintaining a strict surveillance over the major streets of the capital, arrested men and women who distributed these handbills. The three League directors who

³Plutarco Elías Calles to Hearst newspapers, 26 July 1926, in Murray Documents and Addresses, pp. 107-115, *passim*.

had signed the July 14 boycott manifesto were apprehended and charged with subversive activity. On July 22 federal agents closed the Mexico City offices of the LNDLR and made additional arrests. Despite these setbacks, however, the two societies remained undaunted. Their resistance to the government's religious policies continued.⁴

While laymen defended their faith, Church officials were also taking action. Early in July a distressed Pius XI censured the Calles regime for its arbitrary acts. He then asked Catholics throughout the world to join on August 1 in a special day of paryer for the cessation of religious persecution in Mexico. August 1 was deemed an especially appropriate date for world prayer because it was the Feast of St. Peter-in-Chains, commemorating the persecution of early Christians in Rome. Although he bemoaned the "sad vicissitudes" of Mexican Catholicism, the pope disapproved of the League's proposed boycott and still endeavored to avoid a complete breach between Church and State in Mexico. He instructed Tito Crespi, the head of the Mexican apostolic delegation, to investigate the possibility of a compromise with the government. Using the French Chargé d'Affairs

⁴ New York Times, 24 July 1926, p. 12; 25 July 1926, p. 12; 26 July 1926, pp. 1-2; 29 July 1926, pp. 1-2; Excelsior, 22 July 1926; 23 July 1926; 24 July 1926. Whenever the civil authorities would arrest the directors of the League, which happened on more than one occasion, the organization would select a new set of officers and continue its activities as before (Excelsior, 22 July 1926, 23 July 1926).

as an intermediary, Crespi on July 23 obtained an interview with Secretary of Gobernación Tejeda. However, when the Catholic diplomat asked that the State ameliorate its attitude toward the Church, Tejeda reiterated his and Calles' intention of standing firm.⁵

Well aware of Calles' determination to subordinate the Church to the State in Mexico, most prelates believed that more than prayer was required to resolve the religious crisis in their country. Unwilling to submit to Calles' Law, the Mexican hierarchy decided upon a drastic course of action. On July 22 the Episcopal Committee informed Pius XI that

the majority of the Mexican episcopate seek to suspend the cult in the churches of the Republic before the 31 of July, not being able to exercise the cult according to the canons, once the new law becomes effective [on] the 31 of this month.⁶ The episcopate asks approval from the Holy See.

Apparently convinced at last that an open confrontation between Church and State was unavoidable, the pope

⁵ William F. Montavon, Religious Crisis in Mexico (Washington, D. C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1926), pp. 21-23; Excelsior, 6 July 1926; 24 July 1926; 27 July 1926; New York Times, 26 July 1926, p. 2; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 24(1926):783; Hackett, "Church and State Conflict," p. 835; David C. Bailey, ¡Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1974), p. 80.

⁶ Jesús García Gutiérrez [Félix Navarrete], De Cabarrús a Carranza: La legislación anticatólica en México (México: Editorial Jus, 1957), p. 130; Robert E. Quirk, The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1910-1929 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp. 169-170.

signaled his approval of the proposed suspension of public worship in Mexico. He advised the Mexican hierarchy that the Holy See condemns the law and all acts that can signify or be interpreted by the faithful as acceptance or recognition of said law.⁷

The forthcoming clerical withdrawal was announced to the Mexican people on July 25 in a pastoral signed by eight archbishops and twenty-nine bishops. Explaining that the clergy since 1917 had maintained a prudent silence, the prelates declared that the government's flagrant violation of the divine rights of the Church made continued silence impossible. Because they believed that the clergy could not in good conscience exercise the ministry under the terms of Calles' Law, the bishops declared that Catholic priests would withdraw from the churches in Mexico on July 31. Since the suspension of public worship was a protest against unjust laws and not a punitive measure aimed at the Mexican people, the episcopate provided means by which Catholics could continue to practice their religion. As the pastoral disclosed, church buildings would be entrusted to committees of parishioners and would remain open. Furthermore, priests were free to perform their ministerial duties outside of the churches, when it was prudent to do so. And, laymen were authorized in the

⁷ Navarette, Cabarrús a Carranza, p. 130.

absence of a clergyman to perform rites such as marriage and baptism. Although they acknowledged that the Church in Mexico was reduced to a condition similar to death, the hierarchy assured that it would be resurrected. They pledged that with God's favor and the people's help "we will work so that this Decree and the anti-religious articles of the Constitution may be reformed, and we won't stop until . . . [this is] attained." Until reforms could be achieved and the clergy returned to the churches, laymen were warned to avoid actions that carried the penalty of excommunication. Excommunicable offenses included decreeing laws against the Church, arraigning a bishop before a lay judge, physically abusing a clergyman, usurping ecclesiastical goods, marrying before a non-Catholic minister, and educating one's children in a faith other than Roman Catholicism. In their pastoral the episcopate also advised the faithful not to use the clerical suspension as a pretext for leading sterile lives and not to forget the poor priests who would remain without "medios de vivir."⁸

Calles ascribed three motives to the clergy in their

⁸ Mexican episcopate to the Mexican people, 25 July 1926, in Excelsior, 25 July 1926; José González [Luis C. Balderrama], El clero y el gobierno (México: Editorial "Cuauhtémoc," 1927), vol. 2, Documentos para la historia de la crisis en 1926, pp. 17-21.

decision to leave the churches on July 31. First, he claimed that they were afraid of losing sacred property, a fear which was groundless because this property had belonged to the nation since the War of Reform. Secondly, he said that the prelates distrusted the intent behind the constitutional requirement that the priest in charge of each church register with the appropriate municipal authority. Clerical suspicion that the government wanted to interfere in the inner workings of the Church was unwarranted, the executive asserted. Because the government owned church buildings, it needed registration information to keep accurate records and compile necessary statistics. Finally, he recognized the clergy's belief that he was trying to make Mexico a non-Catholic country. Denying this, the president declared that his administration was only fulfilling its legal obligations. He charged that Catholic churchmen were "abandoning their proper sphere," interfering in political and governmental affairs, and seeking to incite rebellion. Calles made it clear that he was unimpressed by the episcopate's grandstand gesture. He would continue to enforce the law, suspension or no suspension.⁹

Unlike the president, the Mexican citizenry was pro-

⁹ Plutarco Elías Calles to New York Times, in Murray, Documents and Addresses, pp. 116-124; New York Times, 1 August 1926, pp. 1-2.

foundly affected by the news of the pending withdrawal. Catholics of every class and race--as many as 50,000 in one day--made pilgrimages to the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Thousands of parishioners went to their local churches and prayed for a prompt resolution of the religious controversy. At these overloaded churches services were conducted every night until midnight with masses being celebrated every half hour in the larger cathedrals. Concerned parents brought their children to be baptized or confirmed before the suspension of official clerical services. Young couples, anxious to be married by a priest, moved their wedding dates forward. To meet the needs of the faithful, clergymen performed numerous baptisms, general communions, mass confirmations, and multiple marriages. On one occasion the aging Archbishop José Mora y del Río, officiating at the main cathedral in Mexico City, fainted after performing 5,000 confirmations in less than twenty-four hours. Under these hectic circumstances, priests from outlying areas came into the larger cities to aid clergymen already there, as countless Mexican Catholics endeavored to fulfill their religious obligations before July 31.¹⁰

¹⁰ Excelsior, 26 July 1926; Hackett, "Church and State Conflict," p. 836; New York Times, 26 July 1926, p. 1; 27 July 1926, pp. 1, 3; 29 July 1926, pp. 1-2; "Mexico," Time, 2 August 1926, p. 13; "Latin America," Time, 9 August 1926, p. 15.

As the end of July approached, Calles let it be known that he would not allow the pastorate to hand over church buildings to selected laymen "vinculados al clero." Instead, he authorized municipal authorities throughout Mexico to assume control of the houses of worship within their jurisdiction, inventory the contents, close all annexes, and then appoint a committee to assume responsibility for each church designated to remain open. Aware that the faithful might resist the attempts of civil officials to take over the churches, Tejeda on July 29 ordered all Catholics disarmed, prohibited the carrying of firearms without a permit, and instructed the police to be ready for action. These precautions proved necessary; for, some devout Catholics did react violently to the government's actions. In Mexico City on July 30 fervent parishioners refused to leave San Rafael Church when ordered to do so. Policemen, who attempted to force the people out of the building, were bombarded with rocks thrown by women standing on the roof. Nine persons were wounded and forty-two arrested before federal troops managed to suppress the riot. That same day aroused Catholics, hoping to prevent the closing of the annex to St. Catherine's church, stoned the attorney general and other officials of the Justice Department. In still another incident in the capital, an unruly crowd objected to the closing of Tepito Church. When

policemen fired on the mob, three persons were killed. Troops, subsequently called to aid in quelling the disturbance, also clashed with the Catholics present. Before order was restored, seventeen persons had been wounded. And, these incidents of bloodshed were not limited to the Federal District. Similar cases of violent Catholic resistance were reported in late July and early August in Torreón, Coahuila; Tampico, Tamaulipas; Guadalajara, Jalisco; Irapuato, Guanajuato; and Pachuca, Hidalgo. Confronted with this situation, the secretary of war advised all federal army officers to maintain a state of military preparedness and to suppress any altercations arising from Catholic opposition.¹¹

While irate Catholics were clashing with civil authorities, Roman Catholic clergymen were preparing to leave the churches. On July 30 they held their final formal religious services. The next day they inventoried church contents and removed their personal belongings. This done, the priests admonished their followers against violence and quit the churches. On August 1 Catholics throughout the world answered the pope's supplication and prayed for their persecuted brethren in Mexico. Mexicans loyal to their

¹¹ Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, trans. Aurelio Garzón del Camino, 2d ed. (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1974), vol. 1, La guerra de los Cristeros, pp. 98-99; New York Times, 30 July 1926, p. 1; 31 July 1926, pp. 1-2; 1 August 1926, pp. 1-2; Excelsior, 29 July 1926; 30 July 1926; 4 August 1926.

faith joined in these prayers and dressed in black to symbolize their state of mourning. However, these Mexicans who openly sympathized with the Church in its struggle against the State were in the minority.¹²

An impressive segment of the adult male population indicated their allegiance to Calles. Congressmen, specifically socialists and labor leaders, assured him that they endorsed his stand against the Church. The Confederación Regional de Obreros Mexicanos (CROM) sponsored the formation of a National Defense League for Freedom of Conscience and then issued a manifesto declaring labor's staunch support for the president. On July 29 three hundred and thirty delegates representing labor groups in the Federal District called on Calles and assured him that workers would defend the Mexican Revolution. And, while Catholics throughout the world prayed on August 1, Calles watched from a balcony as one hundred thousand Mexican citizens paraded in front of the presidential palace. These demonstrators expressed their sentiments toward the president and the Church by carrying placards with slogans, such as "Calles is completing the work of Júarez," "Justice is on the side of Calles," and "The Clergy are Rich, the People Poor." Prominent national leaders

¹²Hackett, "Church and State Conflict," p. 837; Excelsior, 31 July 1926; New York Times, 29 July 1926, p. 1; 2 August 1926, pp. 1-2.

indicated similar sentiments. While denouncing clergymen and laymen who wished to nullify Mexico's laws, Secretary Tejeda rejoiced that most Mexicans were showing their disapproval of these elements. Aaron Sáenz, secretary of foreign relations, chastised the Church for dividing the Mexican people rather than submitting to civil authority. And, ex-president Alvaro Obregón not only applauded Calles' stand in regard to the Church but also blamed the religious crisis on the upper clergy who refused to "subordinate their vanity" and obey the law.¹³

One must speculate why a nation that was overwhelmingly Catholic had so many people who seemingly turned their backs on the Church in its time of need. The reasons are multiple and complex. There were Mexicans who shared Calles' distrust for the "priest politician" and objected to the historic role of the Church in their country. Committed to the goals of the Mexican Revolution, these men and women believed that the Church was unwilling to allow the realization of those goals. They therefore concluded, as the president had, that it was imperative for the State to assert its supremacy. Because this group agreed with

¹³ Excelsior, 28 July 1926; 29 July 1926; 30 July 1926; 2 August 1926; 3 August 1926; New York Times, 26 July 1926; pp. 1-2; 29 July 1926, pp. 1-2; 2 August 1926, pp. 1-2; 3 August 1926, p. 2; CROM to Plutarco Elías Calles, 29 July 1926 and Aaron Sáenz to San Francisco press, 7 August 1926, in Balderrama, El clero y el gobierno, 2:37-39, 50.

Calles' policy of constitutional enforcement, they felt no obligation to back the clergy in their defiance of the government. Of course, not all people who backed the government did so for reasons of idealism or philosophical commitment to the Revolution. Shrewd individuals realized that the religious conflict offered them an opportunity to ingratiate themselves with and win favors from those in power. These opportunities exploited the religious crisis for their own benefit. While it is impossible to determine what percentage of the population fell into this category, there were certainly some military men, politicians, labor leaders, and others who supported Calles for reasons of self interest.¹⁴

Also Mexicans often lacked the freedom to choose sides in the religious controversy. For example, agrarianists who had received land grants from Calles or his predecessors were indebted to the State. Bound to it by economic ties, these men were not free agents. The president expected their support, and they were obliged to give it. Likewise men and women employed by the State--as clerks,

¹⁴ Excelsior, 28 July 1926; 29 July 1926; 30 July 1926; New York Times, 26 July 1926, pp. 1-2; 29 July 1926, pp. 1-2; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, vol. 3, Los Cristeros, pp. 34-36; Alicia Olivera Sedano, Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929: Sus antecedentes y consecuencias (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1966), p. 313. See also documents six through eight in Balderrama, El clero y el gobierno, pp. 37-46. The word revolution, when capitalized, refers to the Mexican Revolution initiated by Francisco Madero in 1910.

secretaries, teachers, or soliders--often lacked freedom of choice. CROM warned government employees that the name of anyone who failed to participate in the August 1 demonstration would be reported. The implication was clear and became even clearer as time passed and the Church-State crisis worsened. People who owed their jobs to the State must give it their allegiance or suffer the consequences.¹⁵

Furthermore, although almost all Mexicans are nominal Catholics, a much smaller number actively practice their religion or feel a serious commitment toward the Church and its clergy. In his discussion of the psychopathology of Mexican Catholicism, Frank Brandenburg explains that urban Catholicism is practiced mainly by women, children, and old people. Women tend to be intimately involved with the Church and to listen carefully to their confessors as substitute husbands and fathers which often causes their spouses to resent the parish priest. In their role as mothers Catholic women bring their children into the fold of the Church. But, most boys upon reaching adolescence reject their religion as part of the ritual of achieving manhood. After puberty, only "sissies" continue to attend church with their mothers. Many men, excepting rural

¹⁵Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, 3:61, 64, 77; New York Times, 31 July 1926, pp. 1-2; John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1919-1936 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), p. 306.

peasants, from the time they are teenagers rarely if ever go to church. To them religion becomes an internal rather than an external manifestation. And, because it is a sign of machismo for a man to criticize the Church, its most vocal detractors often come from Catholic families.¹⁶

One must also realize that when large numbers of Mexicans failed to respond to the Church's pleas in the 1920's, they were not necessarily rejecting Catholicism as a faith. Again, as Frank Brandenburg states in The Making of Modern Mexico,

Catholicism in Mexico often is merely a catch-all label for multiple religious beliefs bearing little resemblance to Roman Catholicism, yet all brought together under the administration and nominal authority of the Catholic Church hierarchy in Mexico.¹⁷

The vast majority of men and women in Mexico have little real knowledge of official Church doctrines. Holding their own personal beliefs, which are often a combination of Catholicism and paganism, they look to the priesthood for three basic services: baptism, marriage, and extreme unction. Except for these specific needs, Mexican Catholics

¹⁶Frank Brandenburg, The Making of Modern Mexico (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 174-176; Melisina Mary Blount [Mrs. George Norman], God's Jester: The Story of the Life and Martyrdom of Father Michael Pro, S.J. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1930), p. 126; Alberto María Carreño, Páginas de historia mexicana: (Pages of Mexican History), Colección de obras diversas, vol. 3 (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1936), p. 61.

¹⁷Brandenburg, Modern Mexico, p. 173.

are not overly dependent upon the clergy. After the withdrawal the episcopate allowed priests to administer the sacraments outside of the churches and laymen under certain conditions to perform these services. The suspension of public worship, then, did not seriously affect the normal religious practices of many Mexicans. They could still attend church, offer their prayers, and seek spiritual comfort from the Virgin of Guadalupe. Because their lives were relatively untouched by the clerical withdrawal, these Catholics did not arise in defense of the Church.¹⁸

While most Mexicans for varied reasons either supported the State or remained neutral during the religious conflict, the Church did have its champions. People who felt strong ties to Catholicism in its institutional form and a sense of responsibility toward the priesthood were deeply aroused by the laicizing of primary education, the deportation of foreign religious, the arraignment of clergymen, the transfer of the churches to civil control, and the suspension of public worship. Deeply committed to their faith, these Mexicans determined to oppose the State even if their decision meant arrest, loss of a job, or an even greater sacrifice. Although a relatively small segment of the

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 171-172; Henry Bamford Parkes, A History of Mexico, Sentry Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), p. 384.

population, the defenders of Catholicism compensated for their small numbers by their fervor. Since the more zealous and literate Catholics traditionally belonged to religious organizations, these groups--especially the LNDLR and ACJM--assumed leadership of the movement to uphold the Church in its struggle with the Calles administration.¹⁹

The first positive step in the struggle with the State was the League's boycott which began on July 31. On that same day Tito Crespi, who had allegedly promoted the scheme, left Mexico at the government's request. Because of the division of opinion among the Mexican people, the effect of the boycott was uneven. In staunchly pro-clerical states like Jalisco the economy was severely depressed, while in other states few persons chose to participate in the movement. By mid-August the boycott reportedly caused business in the capital to suffer a "serious decline." The number of well-to-do women coming to Sanborn's ice cream parlor dropped by fifty percent, and the sale of tickets at movie theaters decreased as much as eighty percent. Two thousand

¹⁹Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:98-99, 101, 103, 258; "Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, Católico militante," in James W. Wilkie and Edna Monzón de Wilkie, México visto en el siglo XX: Entrevistas de historia oral (México: Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Económicas, 1969), pp. 438-439; New York Times, 30 July 1926, p. 1; 1 August 1926, p. 1; Excelsior, 20 July 1926; Francis Patrick Dooley, "The Cristeros, Calles and Mexican Catholicism" (Ph. D. diss., University of Maryland, 1972), p. 101; Olivera Sedano, conflicto religioso p. 131

automobile owners notified the government that they were canceling their licenses and would not use their cars until the religious controversy was satisfactorily resolved. The boycott created financial losses that were serious enough to cause some oilmen, bankers, and businessmen to express their concern to the president.²⁰

As the Church-State crisis worsened, CROM in early August sponsored a series of four debates on relevant topics. Members of that labor organization or of Calles' cabinet defended the actions of the government, while the LNDLR sent men to speak on behalf of the Church. Public interest was so great that the crowds attending each session not only filled the Iris Theater but also overflowed into the streets. Consequently, loudspeakers were installed so that people outside could hear the proceedings. On August 2 Manuel Puig Casauranc, secretary of education, and René Capistrán Garza disputed the merits of laic education and the validity of Article 3 of the constitution. Two nights later Luis L. León, secretary of agriculture, and League

²⁰ New York Times, 29 July 1926, p. 1; 31 July 1926, p. 1; 1 August 1926, pp. 1-2; 4 August 1926, p. 1; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 84-85; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 25(1926): 119-120; Eduardo Iglesias and Rafael Martínez del Campo [Aguiles P. Moctezuma], El conflicto religioso de 1926: Sus orígenes. Su desarrollo. Su solución. 2d ed. 2 vols. (México: Editorial Jus, 1960) 2:401-402.

representative Manuel Herrera Lasso debated the Revolution and Mexican clericalism. At the third meeting on August 6 Juan Rico, a member of CROM, delivered a polemic on religious dogma as viewed by reason and science. Because Roman Catholic dogma was "de categoría indiscutible," the LNDLR refused to participate that night. Then, on August 9 Secretary Luis Morones and Luis Mier y Terán discussed the contribution (or lack of such) of the Church to the cause of the working classes in Mexico. While the participants in these debates did not present any radically new or unexpected arguments, their speeches illustrated the wide divergence of opinion among the Mexican people with regard to the Roman Catholic Church.²¹

While laymen debated, churchmen attempted to arrange a settlement with the State so that the clergy might return to the churches. On August 1 the episcopate revealed its willingness to allow a plebiscite to decide the question of constitutional reform. Until this popular election could be held, the prelates requested that religious regulations and religious persecution be suspended. Rejecting this proposal, Calles reiterated that the government would "act with the required energy to enforce the laws."

²¹John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, p. 306; Excelsior, 3 August 1926; 4 August 1926; 5 August 1926; 7 August 1926; 10 August 1926. Detailed information on these debates, including excerpts from the participants' speeches, may be found in Balderrama, El clero y el gobierno, 2:69-144.

Bishop Pascual Díaz y Barreto, secretary of the Episcopal Committee, then informed the press that there could be no accord between Church and State until repressive laws were either revoked or suspended.²²

Despite this seeming impasse, Archbishop Mora y del Río and Bishop Díaz y Barreto on August 16 presented Calles with a petition from the Catholic hierarchy. It asked the president to cease enforcing the anticlerical provisions of the constitution and to persuade Congress to amend these provisions. Denying any intent of rebellion, the clerics explained that they were seeking the rights they deserved as Christians and citizens and "the recognition of that personality necessary and indispensable to the Church . . . [to assure its] liberties." Calles responded to this memorial by informing the episcopate that he considered its hostility toward the law as tantamount to mutiny. He warned the clergy that as chief of state he was obligated to punish "those who by their acts or their preachings provoke acts of rebellion." Because he was fully in accord with the principles embodied within the constitution, Calles insisted that he could not comply with the request that he abandon his enforcement policy. If the

²² New York Times, 2 August 1926, p. 1; 3 August 1926, p. 1; 4 August 1926, p. 1.

clergy desired reform, he advised, they should wait until Congress convened in September and ask that body for redress of grievances.²³

Disregarding this advice, the episcopate tried once more to reach an agreement with Calles. Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores of Morelia and Bishop Diaz met with the president on August 21 to explain the Church's position to him. The two clerics expressed their conviction that petitions would not solve the religious problem in Mexico. Past experience had shown that state legislatures were not receptive to Catholic wishes, and the same might prove true of the national Congress. Furthermore, immediate action was needed, but the legislature was not in session. Only the president could alleviate the crisis, the prelates insisted, by suspending his decree of July 31 until legal reforms were realized. Emphatically assuring the two bishops that his position regarding the Church had not changed, Calles stressed that the clergy upon its return to the churches would be subject to existing regulations. He also declared that no power, papal or other, would be allowed to violate Mexican sovereignty or dictate to the government.²⁴

²³ Mexican prelates to the president, 16 August 1926, and Plutarco Elías Calles to the Mexican episcopate, 19 August 1926, in Murray, Documents and Addresses, pp. 199-202, 127-132.

²⁴ El Universal (Mexico City), 22 June 1929; Alberto

During August, the pope read news reports and heard rumors concerning a possible reconciliation between Church and State in Mexico. He feared that the Mexican hierarchy in its desire to resume public worship might disregard his previous instructions, i.e., not to do anything that even remotely implied acceptance or recognition of measures like Calles' Law. Through Cardinal Pietro Gasparri Pius XI directed the Mexican episcopate to remain firm in its position and to reject any proposals which did "not conform to the instructions given by the Holy See." The clergymen quickly reassured the Holy Father that they would obey his orders.²⁵

By late August, then, both the president and the Catholic hierarchy had clearly stated their positions. Because he was determined to subordinate the Church to the authority of the State, Calles adhered to his policy of constitutional enforcement. Refusing to be pressured or intimidated, he required the clergy to obey Mexican laws. Conversely, churchmen insisted that they could not exercise the ministry under the terms of the Constitution of 1917

María Carreño, El arzobispo de México: Exmo. sr. dr. don Pascual Díaz y el conflicto religioso, 2d ed. rev. (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1943), pp. 113, 126-135.

²⁵ Hackett, "Mexico," CH 25:119; Pietro Gasparri to José Mora y del Río, 21 August 1926, and Jose Mora y del Río to Pietro Gasparri, 24 August 1926, in Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, pp. 147-148.

and Calles' Law. Before public worship could be resumed, they stipulated that objectionable religious regulations must be suspended, amended, or revoked. The demands of Calles and those of the episcopate were mutually exclusive. Unless and until one or the other was willing to make major concessions, prospects for a speedy settlement of the religious controversy seemed remote.

In his annual message to Congress on September 1, 1926, Calles justified his position. He told the legislators that the Church had not only rejected the ecclesiastical provisions of the constitution but also asked their followers to disobey these measures. Because it was the executive's duty to demand compliance with the law, he had reformed the penal code concerning the crimes related to religion and religious discipline. Stressing that no persecution was intended, the president expressed his confidence that a majority of the Mexican people approved of the government's conduct. He added that during the past year for reasons of noncompliance with constitutional requirements forty-two churches had been closed, seventy-three convents, and seven centers of "difusión religiosa." Additionally, 185 foreign priests had been expelled from Mexico. As spokesman for his fellow congressmen, Gonzalo N. Santos responded to this address. While accusing the clergy of seditious activity, he congratulated Calles for

his "firm and patriotic attitude" toward the Roman Catholic Church.²⁶

Although aware that Congress was not sympathetic toward the Church, the Catholic episcopate followed Calles' advice and appealed to that body. On September 6 they asked the legislature to pass the amendments necessary to establish religious liberty in Mexico, insure the right of parents to determine their children's education, recognize the legitimacy of religious orders, accept the independence of ecclesiastical authority in matters of religion, and return churches to the control of the clergy. The bishops specifically petitioned for the revocation or reform of Articles 3, 5, 24, 27, and 130 of the constitution. Hoping to influence the legislature's decision, the Executive Committee of the LNDLR on September 6 directed a circular to its membership. They were asked to file petitions with Congress, to telegraph their senators and deputies, and to participate with renewed vigor in the ongoing boycott. Concerned Catholics responded to this directive. Within a short time the Chamber of Deputies received memorials signed by more than 150,000 laymen who advocated the

²⁶ Informes rendidos por el c. Gral. Plutarco Elías Calles, presidente de la unión, ante el h. congreso de la unión, los días 1 de septiembre de 1925 y 1 de septiembre de 1926 y contestación de los c. c. presidentes del citado congreso (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1925?), pp. 8-10, 71, 75.

requested amendments.²⁷

To the distress of the Catholic clergy and laity, debates in the Chamber of Deputies over the September 6 petition revealed the deep-seated anticlericalism of almost all members. While speaking in defense of Article 3, Alejandro Cerisola charged that the Church wished to control education so that it could insure the continuance of clerical power in the temporal sphere. Deputy Ricardo Treviño claimed that the current religious controversy in Mexico was actually a political, social, and economic conflict between reactionary forces and the Revolution. Another congressman went so far as to blame the Catholic priesthood for most of the bloody strife occurring throughout Mexican history. However, at least one man expressed more moderate views. While agreeing that the upper clergy were ambitious, Ernesto Hidalgo insisted that the parish priests were humble and honest. Furthermore, he warned that the government should not close parochial schools when it did not have the funds to replace them with public institutions. Asserting that religious instruction was not always

²⁷ Mexican episcopate to Congress, 6 September 1926, in Balderrama, El clero y el gobierno, 2:149-154; Circular 7-A, Executive Committee of the LNDLR, 6 September 1926, LA:44; Hackett, "Mexico," 25:287. Article 24 required all religious ceremonies to be celebrated inside of church buildings. Article 27 nationalized all church property and prohibited religious denominations from acquiring, possessing or administering real estate.

detrimental, he emphasized that many of the leaders of the Reform Era were products of Catholic schools. Hidalgo's words did not impress his fellow deputies. They decided that members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy by defying the constitution and declaring allegiance to the papacy had renounced their Mexican citizenship. Since the bishops were no longer citizens, they did not have the right to petition Congress. Accordingly, on September 24 the Chamber of Deputies voted 171-1 to reject the episcopal petition.²⁸

While the deputies were debating, the episcopate in mid-September decided again to send representatives to Rome to acquaint Pius XI with Mexican conditions. Selected to compose this commission were Archbishop José María González Valencia; the bishop of León, Emeterio Valverde y Téllez; and Jenaro Méndez del Río, the bishop of Tehuantepec. The three men were militants who sympathized with the LNDR and its projects. In fact, shortly before leaving on this trip, González Valencia directed a pastoral to the Catholic societies in his diocese. He gravely informed them that it was the mission of the clergy to suffer abuses and to resist the "furores de la persecución." Praising the work of the League and other pious organizations, he advised

²⁸Debates on the episcopate's petition, in Balderrama, El clero y el gobierno, 2:159-160, 175-176, 227-228, 233; Moctezuma, Conflicto religioso, 2:411.

the faithful that they were obligated to support the patriotic and Christian activities of these dedicated groups.²⁹

Shortly after this commission left for Rome, Calles took new steps against the Church. In late September he reiterated a request for Congress to restrict clerical numbers in the Federal District, and the requested limitation law was passed in October. It required anyone who wished to exercise the ministry in the capital to register with his municipal president, but stipulated that no more than ninety clergymen of any given faith would be registered. Under this restriction less than one-third of the 289 priests in the Federal District would be able to practice their profession even if the suspension of public worship ended.³⁰

The position of the Catholic hierarchy continued to erode, and by the fall of 1926 many prelates had voluntarily come to the capital where they wished to participate in the discussions and decisions of the Episcopal Committee headquartered there. At the same time, Calles was determined to congregate all members of the upper clergy in the

²⁹Dooley, "The Cristeros," pp. 139-140; C. José Ignacio Gallegos, Apuntes para la historia de la persecución religiosa en Durango de 1926 a 1929 (México, 1965), pp. 17-19.

³⁰Plutarco Elías Calles to Chamber of Deputies, 27 September 1926, in Balderrama, El clero y el gobierno, 2:145-147; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico's Campaign for Enforcement of Church Regulations," CH 25(1926):410.

Federal District so that the government might better monitor their activities. He issued orders for the arrest of Church officials who refused to come willingly from outlying areas to Mexico City. However, one recalcitrant churchman successfully defied the government's dictates. In a pastoral of October 25 Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez of Guadalajara affirmed rumors that the secretary of gobernación had ordered his apprehension. Protesting that he had done nothing to warrant this action, he declared that "to surrender myself at present without any guarantee would be to compromise the interests of the . . . church. . . ." Therefore, he announced his decision to go into hiding. Having addressed these words to his followers, Orozco managed to evade the authorities and disappear somewhere in his archdiocese.³¹

Pius XI was distressed by the information which the three Mexican bishops brought him and by later reports of Calles' actions against the Church. In mid-November he issued an encyclical regarding religious persecution in Mexico. While condemning the tyranny of the government and the arbitrariness of the Constitution of 1917, he asked the Virgin of Guadalupe "to forgive the crimes committed

³¹Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, p. 157; Francis J. Weber, ed., Francisco Orozco y Jiménez: An apologia pro vita sua (México, 1968), pp. 12-13; Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, archbishop of Guadalajara, to the Catholics of the archbishopric, 25 October 1926, LA:44.

against her and to intercede for the return of peace and concord in Mexico." The Holy Father praised Mexican Catholic associations for standing "by the side of the clergy like soldiers" and encouraged them to remain steadfast in their support of the Roman Catholic Church.³²

Loyal Catholics, while in a minority position, needed little encouragement "to stand by the side of the clergy like soldiers." By autumn, 1926, they committed themselves to helping the Church win a decisive victory over the State. The question that most concerned them was how this victory could be achieved. Experience had shown that passive attempts in resolving the Church-State conflict to their satisfaction were ineffectual. While the LNDLR boycott had temporarily depressed the economy in some areas, it had not intimidated the government. Likewise, negotiations between the episcopate and the president had accomplished nothing. Furthermore, Congress had been antagonistic toward the Church and unreceptive to the desires of the Catholic clergy and laity. The apparent futility of pursuing "legitimate" methods of protest led some disillusioned Catholics to conclude that violence was their only viable alternative.

³² Encíclica de S. S. Pío Papa XI: Sobre la persecución religiosa en México, edición de la LNDLR (México, 1927), fondo XV, "Conflictos religiosos, 1910-1929," carpeta 1, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Departamento Cultural de Condumex, S.A., México, D.F. Hackett, "Mexico," CH 25(1927):602.

They decided that military action would succeed where boycotts, negotiations, and petitions had failed. This decision led to a bloody and bitter civil war in which crusaders for Christ, the Cristeros, pitted themselves against the Mexican State.³³

³³Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, pp. 72, 131; Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:125.

CHAPTER IV

THE CRISTERO REBELLION

Catholic resistance to Plutarco Elías Calles' religious policies resulted in small, scattered uprisings in Mexico during the late summer and the fall of 1926. Federal troops in August, for example, arrested the local priest and three ACJM members from Chalchihuites, Zacatecas, on charges of conspiracy against the government. When the four men were executed without benefit of a trial, an outraged Pedro Quintanar of Valparaíso initiated a short-lived rebellion. He and his followers defied the authorities for several weeks, but were finally forced by lack of supplies to disband. Then, in September Luis Navarro Origel and his brothers rebelled in Guanajuato, and Trinidad Mora arose in Durango. These and similar revolts, which erupted in ten states by the end of the year, were spontaneous and uncoordinated. While sharing a hatred for the government and a devotion to the Church, the guerrilla bands were independent of each other.¹

¹David C. Bailey, ¡Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1974), pp. 87-89; Eduardo Iglesias and Rafael Martínez del Campo [Aguiles P. Moctezuma], El conflicto religioso de 1926: Sus orígenes. Su desarrollo. Su solución., 2d. ed., 2 vols, (México: Editorial Jus, 1960), 2: 427, 453;

Although the significance of these uprisings was publicly belittled by the government, the Department of War ordered the enlistment of an additional five thousand troops and advised military commanders to wage an energetic campaign against the insurgents. LNDLR leadership, which desired the overthrow of the Calles' regime and the establishment of Catholic rule in Mexico, feared that the disorganized groups of poorly-equipped rebels could not withstand a determined assault by federal forces. Consequently, in September the League decided to coordinate a full scale revolution that would unite the manpower and resources of discontented Catholics throughout Mexico. René Capistrán Garza was selected to head the movement. And, a special war committee was formed to gather information on the revolts already in progress and to plan an escalated military effort.²

Realizing the need for adequate funding for its proposed military effort, the League looked to the United

Alicia Olivera Sedano, Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929: Sus antecedentes y consecuencias (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1966), pp. 131, 139-140, 152-154; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, trans. Aurelio Garzón del Camino, 2d ed. (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1974), vol. 1, La guerra de los Cristeros, pp. 106-108, 113.

² Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," Current History 25(1926):438 (hereafter cited as CH); Moctezuma, Conflicto religioso, 2:428; Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, pp. 132, 137.

States, where both public officials and private citizens had criticized Calles' treatment of Mexican Catholics.

During the spring of 1926, the House of Representatives had compiled information on the Mexican religious crisis, held hearings on that subject, and discussed the possible severing of diplomatic relations with Mexico. Additionally, Catholic prelates in the United States had publicly sympathized with the plight of the Church in Mexico, and religious organizations had evidenced similar feelings.

In May of 1926 the National Catholic Welfare Conference had written to President Calvin Coolidge and denounced the anti-religious provisions of the Constitution of 1917.

That same month the Knights of Columbus had sponsored a mass meeting in Washington, D. C. to protest the actions of the Calles administration. And, at a national meeting in August, the Knights of Columbus had criticized Coolidge for continuing United States patronage of the Mexican government under the present circumstances. Despite repeated requests that he act on behalf of Mexican Catholics, Coolidge insisted that the Church-State conflict in Mexico was "purely a domestic affair" in which he would not interfere. Although aware of Coolidge's official position, the League hoped that private citizens and organizations in the United States would convert their sympathy for Mexican Catholics into financial

assistance for the proposed revolution.³

The League selected René Capistrán Garza, Ramón Ruiz Rueda, Luis Ruiz Rueda, and José Gaxiola to undertake a fund raising tour in the United States in the fall of 1926. In their quest for financial aid the four men visited major cities in Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, and other states. Capistrán Garza, who carried with him letters of introduction from the LNDLR and from the archbishop of Mexico, conducted himself as though he represented the episcopate and implied that it endorsed the proposed rebellion. However, while Catholics in the United States were willing to offer moral support to their brethren in Mexico, most drew the line at financing an armed movement. Clergymen usually limited themselves to offering prayers and a small contribution to the four Mexicans. The laity was similarly sympathetic but tightfisted. The Knights of Columbus, for instance, offered funds to feed and clothe needy Mexicans in exile, but refused to underwrite a revolution directed against a government recognized by the United States. Although he had collected little in

³ Excelsior (Mexico City), 27 July 1926; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 24(1926):117-118, 277, 615; 25:120-121, 288; New York Times, 5 July 1926, p. 12. See also Committee of the American Episcopate, Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Episcopate of the United States on the Religious Situation in Mexico (New Haven, Connecticut: Knights of Columbus, Supreme Council, n. d.).

hard cash, Capistrán Garza optimistically assured League directors in Mexico that money would be forthcoming.⁴

As the League's representatives canvassed the United States, Catholics in Mexico came under increasing pressure. Following the suspension of public worship, the faithful had endeavored to fulfill their religious obligations in ways not specifically proscribed by Calles' Law. Clergymen celebrated masses and administered the sacraments in private homes. When priests were unavailable, laymen conducted their own services. These practices were widespread by late 1926, and with this in mind, Calles in November submitted to Congress a bill to "seal every loophole in the present regulations" and assure "complete enforcement" of the religious provisions of the Constitution of 1917. The resultant law of November 25 strengthened existing religious regulations, made civil marriage obligatory, outlawed lay services, and prohibited the holding of private masses. This measure increased resentment among Catholics, who now felt that religious persecution was reaching into their homes and depriving

⁴Olivera Sedano, Conflictos religiosos, pp. 142, 144 147; Francis Patrick Dooley, "The Cristeros, Calles and Mexican Catholicism" (Ph. D. diss., University of Maryland, 1972), pp. 132-134; Alberto María Carreño, El arzobispo de México: Excmo. sr. dr. don Pascual Díaz y el conflicto religioso, 2d. ed. rev. (Méjico: Ediciones Victoria, 1943), pp. 301-302; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 102-104.

them of the freedom to practice their faith.⁵

Calles' actions strengthened the resolve of the LNDLR, but the association realized that it could not organize a religious rebellion without first consulting the Catholic hierarchy. On November 23 League officials--Rafael Ceniceros y Villareal, president; Luis Bustos, vice-president; and Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, second vice-president--met with approximately twelve members of the Episcopal Committee. At this conference Ceniceros y Villareal explained that legal means of protest were useless, that the Mexican people were already up in arms, and that the LNDLR planned to lead a revolution. He asked the episcopate to refrain from condemning the movement, to approve of the League as its leader, to allow priests to serve canonically in the military, and to influence affluent Catholics to provide monetary assistance. Four days later Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores and Bishop Pascual Díaz y Barreto delivered the hierarchy's reply to these requests. The clerics acknowledged the prerogative of Catholics to defend themselves, with arms if necessary,

⁵ Melisina Mary Blount [Mrs. George Norman], God's Jester: The Story of the Life and Martyrdom of Father Michael Pro, S. J. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1930), p. 126; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 25:437, 602; John Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America: A History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), p. 399.

when their rights were under attack and legal measures had been exhausted. And, they recognized the League as the logical organization to head a military effort. While the bishops did not feel it appropriate to appoint chaplains to serve in the military, they indicated that any clergyman who requested permission to minister to the rebel forces would receive it. But, the prelates refused to ask wealthy Catholics to provide funds, because such action would compromise the official Church, which was already in a perilous position.⁶

By failing to condemn armed resistance, sanctioning the League's leadership of the projected revolt, and allowing priests to serve the rebels, the hierarchy left itself open to charges of responsibility for the civil war that began in 1927. In reality, the bishops had little, if any, part in the planning and execution of the rebellion. Furthermore, after it began bishops as a group were careful to avoid any overt action that might associate them directly with the resistance movement. Nevertheless, the accusation of episcopal complicity contained an

⁶ Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, pp. 132-126; [Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores], Recuerdo de recuerdos: Autobiografía del excmo. y rdmo. sr. dr. don Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, arzobispo de Morelia y asistente al solio pontificio (México: "Buena Prensa," 1942), p. 85; James W. Wilkie, "The Meaning of the Cristero Religious War," in James W. Wilkie and Albert L. Michaels, eds. Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval, 1910-1940 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 160; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 96-98.

element of truth. Church officials in Mexico bore a moral, if not an actual, responsibility for the war which disrupted their country from 1927 to 1929. If in November of 1926 the prelates had rejected the League's requests and advised against insurrection, the Catholic revolution would probably never have materialized. It would have been incongruous for the faithful to arise in defense of the Roman Catholic Church if that same institution counseled against such action. However, most Mexican prelates by the fall of 1921 were in a militant mood. They wanted the people to resist the Calles government and, therefore, acquiesced in the League's plans.⁷

After receiving the episcopate's reply, the League moved forward with its plans. Initiating a massive propaganda campaign, it quickly became the "point of union of all the militant Catholics in the fight and of all the organizations. . . ." LNDLR agents spread from the capital to other parts of Mexico and finalized preparations for a series of uprisings scheduled to erupt simultaneously on January 1, 1927. From the United States Réne Capistrán Garza named an El Paso youth, José Gándara, to serve as the movement's military chief. Then, on

⁷ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 98-100, 304; Olivera Sedano, Conflictos religiosos, p. 149; Jean Meyer discusses the attitudes of individual prelates in regard to the armed movement in La Cristiada, 1:19-27.

December 8 League officials informed the U.S. ambassador to Mexico, James Sheffield, of the impending rebellion.⁸

Capistrán Garza and Gándara issued a call to arms in a manifesto addressed to the nation. They insisted that the Mexican people wanted to remake their country, which was in the hands of tyrants who were systematically and deliberately destroying it. Claiming to be the leaders of the "fuerzas vivas" in Mexico, the two men renounced the Calles regime and proclaimed Capistrán Garza as provisional president. They then asked all Mexican citizens and soldiers to join in the fight to secure religious, educational, and political liberty; freedom of association; freedom of the press; guarantees for workers and investors; and respect for private property.⁹

The new year saw revolutionary bands, some accompanied by priests, arise against the government. During the first weeks in January, newspapers reported uprisings in Jalisco, Durango, Colima, Zacatecas, Coahuila, Nayarit, Guanajuato, Aguascalientes, Guerrero, San Luis Potosí, Michoacán, and

⁸Olivera Sedano, Conflict religioso, pp. 115, 156; Dooley, "The Cristeros," p. 147; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 105, 108; Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:74-75.

⁹Manifesto, René Capistrán Garza and José F. Gándara to the nation, January, 1927, reel 44, Archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as LA followed by microfilm reel number).

México. The approximately three thousand men who initially answered the call to arms were disaffected or discontented inhabitants of rural areas, where religion played a more important role in the lives of the people. With an illiteracy rate approaching 60 per cent, their political consciousness was profoundly shaped by the preachings of the local parish priest. Unaware of the intricacies of Church-State affairs in Mexico, they believed Calles' religious policies to be persecutory. As zealous Catholics, these men determined to defend their faith and assure the reign of Christ in Mexico. Believing themselves to be engaged in a modern crusade, they declared war upon the State.¹⁰

With the exception of hacendados and agrarianists, every rural class and ethnic group participated to a greater

¹⁰ El Universal (Mexico City), 4-15 January 1927; Jesús Degollado Guízar, Memorias de Jesús Degollado Guízar: Ultimo general en jefe del ejército cristero (México: Editorial Jus, 1957), pp. 21-23; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 25: 917; Olivera Sedano, Conflict religioso, pp. 157, 170-171, 181; Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:126-127, 387; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, vol. 3, Los Cristeros, pp. 272, 286, 292-295, 310; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 118, 303. My dissertation does not attempt to present a comprehensive study of the Cristero rebellion. Anyone desiring detailed information on the rebellion, its causes, its participants, and its accomplishments should consult Jean Meyer's three volume work, La Cristiada (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1974).

or lesser degree in the resistance movement. Of course, not all of the men who fought in the rebellion at its beginning or adhered to it at a later date were motivated solely or even primarily by religious fervor. Some of the insurgents were demoted federal officers, disappointed politicians, land-hungry campesinos, or conservative opponents to the Mexican Revolution. Others were simply opportunists using the movement as a pretext to pillage and plunder. Nevertheless, a vast majority of the rebels were devout Catholics fighting for their faith. They illustrated their religiosity by holding daily prayer of the rosary, hearing masses on Sunday, having communion and confession, wearing religious medals, and consecrating their work to Christ.¹¹

The leadership that the LNDLR provided to the armed resistance movement in its early stages was nominal. The rebels were basically disunited and disorganized. With

¹¹Meyer, La Cristiada, 3:20-22, 31, 43, 280, 294; Olivera Sedano, Conflictio religioso, pp. 181, 211, 214. Ample evidence of the deep religious fervor and devoutness of the Cristero troops appears in later Cristero literature, such as Degollado Guízar, Memorias; J. Andrés Lara, Prisionero de Callistas y Cristeros (México: Editorial Jus, 1954); Heriberto Navarrete, Por Dios y por mi patria: Memorias de mi participación en la defensa de la libertad de conciencia y culto, durante la persecución religiosa en México de 1926 a 1929, 3d ed. (México: Editorial Jus, 1973). The term agrarianist as used in the text refers to men who individually or collectively received grants of land from the government.

some exceptions they adopted the tactics of guerrilla warfare in which scattered bands of fifteen to twenty men moved rapidly, carried out daring attacks, and then retreated to safety. Although facing an opponent with vastly superior manpower and resources, the insurgents engaged federal troops, cut communication lines, assaulted private automobiles, attacked trains, and seized towns.¹²

In a press interview on January 9, Calles voiced his opinion on the causes behind the upheaval in Mexico. He accused the clergy of exploiting the people and keeping them in ignorance. Explaining that he knew of no redeeming social work ever performed in Mexico by Catholic priests, the president insisted that their only program was

to gather and to monopolize the wealth of the country, to be owners of the largest part of the territory of the Republic . . . to engage in the exploitation of the peasants, always trying to have in their hands the national wealth of Mexico so as to have supreme power. . . .¹³

Calles then declared that the goal of his administration was "to limit the clergy to its proper sphere of religion and to leave the State free to exercise its functions."

¹²Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:144-145; Olivera Sedano, Conflict religioso, pp. 139, 209, 212; William Weber Johnson, Heroic Mexico: The Violent Emergence of a Modern Nation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1958), p. 393; El Universal, 4 January 1927.

¹³William English Walling, The Mexican Question: Mexico and American-Mexican Relations under Calles and Obregón (New York: Robins Press, 1927), pp. 200, 202.

Because churchmen resisted the government's efforts and encouraged laymen to do likewise, Mexico was in a state of turmoil.¹⁴

Calles and his associates believed the clergy, particularly the episcopate, to be the motivating force behind the religious rebellion. On January 10 Pascual Díaz was arrested. Charged with being the "intellectual leader" of the resistance movement, he was expelled from Mexico two days later. His deportation was a severe blow to the Episcopal Committee where he served as secretary. Holding an emergency meeting, the committee determined to leave the title of secretary with their exiled comrade, but appointed a "prosecretary" to fulfill Díaz' duties in his absence. On the same day of Díaz' arrest, Archbishop Ruiz y Flores and the bishops of Saltillo, Aguascalientes, Papantla, and San Luis Potosí were also taken into custody because of rumors that illegal religious ceremonies were being performed within the episcopal headquarters. Although these five prelates were soon released, they were required to report their whereabouts to the secretary of gobernación every day. Later, on January 30 the president through Secretary Adalberto Tejeda ordered all Catholic priests, whatever their rank, to register with the Department of Gobernación by February 10. Any clergyman who

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 200.

failed to register was declared an outlaw.¹⁵

Additional charges against the hierarchy were hurled by Calles' chief of staff, General José Alvarez. Alvarez publicly stated that churchmen were the power behind the LNDLR and were directly responsible for the ongoing civil war. On January 17 the Episcopal Committee replied in the press that neither it nor the lower clergy directed the League.¹⁶ But, on the following day an unconvinced Alvarez assured reporters that

The declaration that the League of Religious Defense which has flung subversive sheets of paper, inciting the Army to rebel against the Government is not directed by the Episcopate can only be believed by children. . . . The rest of the country knows perfectly well that this institution has been created and directed by the Episcopate.¹⁷

Calles' administration moved to suppress the rebellion. Reinforcements were sent to commanders of the most seriously affected zones. The secretary of war ordered that all captured rebels be sent to Mexico City and announced that any clergyman apprehended with weapons in hand would be expelled from the country. The arms and property of insurgents were confiscated and used to defray the cost of quashing the revolt. Border patrols were strengthened to

¹⁵ Hackett, "Mexico," CH 25:918; Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, p. 165; El Universal, 11 January 1927; 12 January 1927.

¹⁶ El Universal, 17 January 1927.

¹⁷ El Universal, 18 January 1927.

prevent the smuggling of military hardware from the United States, and only specially authorized merchants within Mexico were allowed to sell arms and ammunition. Confident that these procedures were adequate, Calles on February 10 announced the suppression of the "Catholic revolution."¹⁸ Although he acknowledged that a few bands of rebels remained in action, the president gave assurances that they would be rapidly dispersed.

To Calles' surprise, however, the government proved unable to disperse the guerrillas, whose weaknesses also proved to be their strengths. The widespread geographical extension of the rebellion forced the State to fight simultaneously on several fronts. The absence of any overall strategy or battle plan among the scattered groups of insurgents made them difficult to anticipate or out-maneuver. When federal forces did score a victory, they usually defeated only one semi-autonomous rebel band, while the others remained relatively unaffected. Because the armed movement lacked centralized military leadership, no one person was indispensable to it. For the guerrillas, then, decentralization, disorganization, and disunity had their practical advantages. While they could not defeat the State, neither could they be defeated by it.

¹⁸Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, p. 181; El Universal, 10 January 1927; 14 January 1927; 19 January 1927; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 25: 917-918.

The Mexican Bishops' Commission in Rome openly endorsed the Catholic revolution that Calles was determined to suppress. Archbishop José María González Valencia of Durango knew of the difficulties faced by the insurgents and felt that they needed encouragement. He offered comfort to his flock, especially those in arms, in a pastoral of February 11. Reminding the faithful that he had left them to come to the Eternal City, he stressed that his thoughts and heart remained with them. He then referred to the rebellion under way in Mexico. Addressing himself to his "hijos" fighting in defense of their religious and social rights, he declared that after having thought at length on it before God, and having consulted the wisest theologians of the city of Rome, we must tell you: be tranquil in your consciences and receive our benedictions.¹⁹ The archbishop's words made it clear that he condoned the actions of Catholics who had risen against the Mexican government. And, later in February Bishops Emeterio Valverde y Téllez and Jenaro Méndez del Río joined the archbishop of Durango in informing newspapermen that Calles had pushed the Mexican people into armed defense.

¹⁹C. José Ignacio Gallegos, Apuntes para la historia de la persecución religiosa en Durango de 1926 a 1929 (México, 1965), pp. 20-22: José María González y Valencia, archbishop of Durango, to his archdiocese, 11 February 1927, fondo XV, "Conflictos religiosos, 1910-1929," carpeta 1, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Departamento Cultural de Condumex, S.A., México, D.F. (hereafter cited as CEHM).

The prelates argued that Catholics enjoyed the "natural and inalienable" right to protect themselves against unjust aggressors and proclaimed in no uncertain terms that Calles and his cohorts were guilty of aggression. Additionally, realizing that the Mexican rebels needed more than moral support, the three bishops approved and advocated a "world-wide collection for the financial assistance of the . . . LNDLR." The three men believed that victory would come once the League had enough money to finance the rebellion adequately.²⁰

On February 9 René Capistrán Garza, who was also well aware of the League's imperative need for money, reported to the Directive Committee about his progress in the United States. He wrote enthusiastically of a group of private citizens, that included William F. Buckley of Patempec Oil Company, who appeared interested in making funds available to the LNDLR. Before the Americans would actually make any contribution, however, they desired United States recognition of the belligerents in Mexico. Therefore, Capistrán Garza explained, he had asked the Coolidge administration to recognize the insurgents as

²⁰ José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate: Gran Defensor de la iglesia, vol. 1 (México: Editorial "Rex Mex," 1952), p. 89; José María González y Valencia, archbishop of Durango, Emeterio Valverde y Téllez, bishop of León, and Genaro Méndez del Río, bishop of Tehuantepec, to Luis Picard, 20 February 1927, LA:44.

soon as they captured a border town. Suggesting Tamaulipas as a possible target, he bitterly criticized José Gándara's failure to fulfill a promise to attack Ciudad Juárez on January 1, 1927, and announced the severing of all ties with this former associate.²¹

As indicated in this report, William F. Buckley and multimillionaire Nicolas Brady were willing with qualifications to provide approximately \$500,000 to aid the resistance in Mexico. However, while this transaction was still in the discussion stage, something went wrong. At least one of the potential contributors turned his attention from Capistrán Garza to Bishop Díaz, who was also in the United States at the time and was insistent that Capistrán Garza did not represent the Mexican episcopate. On one occasion Díaz in a discussion with Buckley allegedly stated that a coalition government sympathetic to the Church was a more realistic prospect for Mexico than the exclusively Catholic government sought by the League. Whether because of Díaz' negative influence or for other reasons, the financial transaction between Garza and the Americans collapsed. The Mexican layman bitterly accused Díaz of discrediting him before Buckley and Brady and sabotaging the negotiations. The bishop, on the other hand, claimed to have been unaware that Capistrán Garza

²¹Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 120-121.

was in contact with the two wealthy Americans. In fact, Díaz contended that he was also trying to obtain money from them to further "the cause." Whatever the truth of the matter, neither Capistrán Garza nor Díaz ever received the \$500,000 so desperately needed by the LNDLR. And, the organization chose to place blame for the failure on the bishop of Tabasco.²²

While this complex situation was unfolding in the United States, significant events were transpiring in Mexico. In March Alvaro Obregón, apparently with Calles' consent, initiated a series of extraofficial conferences with the episcopate. In an initial meeting with Archbishop Ruiz y Fores and Bishop Ignacio Valdespino y Díaz, the ex-president asked the hierarchy to state in written form its conditions for a settlement of the Church-State conflict. The bishops reminded Obregón that they would have to consult the Holy See before finalizing any agreement, but then provided the requested statement. It contained basically the same demands as the episcopal petition to the Mexican Congress in September, 1926. Labeling these demands outrageous, Obregón refused to submit them to Calles for consideration. Unwilling to admit defeat, however, the

²² Ibid., pp. 121-129. In the pages cited David Bailey presents a detailed explanation of the confusing events resulting in the failure of the loan negotiations. He discusses both René Capistrán Garza's and Pascual Díaz' conflicting versions of the incident.

ex-president requested still another conference. On this occasion he asked the prelates to send as representative someone who had not been involved in previous negotiations. When the selected bishop, Manuel Fulcheri, met with Obregón on March 23, the Sonoran proposed that the clergy resume public worship and trust the government to act reasonably with regard to religious matters. Not surprisingly, the hierarchy rejected this proposal. Calles blamed the failure of negotiations on clerical obstinacy, but Archbishop Mora y del Río saw the matter in a different light. In a letter to Bishop Valverde y Téllez in Rome, he explained that Obregón had required a settlement based upon submission to the law. Because this was unacceptable, nothing had been accomplished. Mora added that "no other recourse remains, then, than armed defense." He assured his fellow bishop that "everyone" in Mexico was optimistic that the rebels with their battle cry of "Viva Cristo Rey" would win a victory for the Church.²³

To improve chances of attaining that victory, René Capistrán Garza commissioned Manuel de la Peza to go to Rome. He was to present Capistrán Garza's version of the

²³Ibid., pp. 157-158; Dooley, "The Cristeros," pp. 166-167; José Mora y del Río, archbishop of Mexico, to Bishop Emeterio Valverde Téllez, 27 March 1927, LA:44; Miguel de la Mora y Mora, bishop of San Luis Potosí, to José María González y Valencia, 24 May 1927, LA:44.

Brady-Buckley affair, to ask the Holy See to exert influence on the two Americans to provide financial support, and to obtain a papal order restraining churchmen from obstructing the League's activities. At a meeting on April 6, Pius XI instructed the Mexican to explain his mission to Secretary Pietro Gasparri. De la Peza subsequently told the secretary of state about the work of the LNDLR, its monetary problems, and the progress of the Catholic revolution. He explicitly insisted that Catholics were capable of governing Mexico after Calles was deposed and warned that any coalition government held dangers for the Church. Gasparri later asked the Mexican Bishops' Commission at the Vatican to verify their countryman's report. The prelates assured that the Cristero movement was serious but that its efficacy depended upon "los elementos pecuniarios." Gasparri responded that Catholics in Mexico were justified in resisting the Calles regime and that the Mexican prelates should help them. Concerned that financial difficulties might undermine the resistance movement, the Mexican Bishops' Commission in mid-April addressed brief letters to William Buckley and Nicolas Brady. The three bishops endorsed the LNDLR and asked the two Americans to assist that association in any way possible. Because of the actions of these clergymen and the apparent sympathy of Secretary Gasparri, there seemed

hope that de la Peza's mission would prove fruitful.²⁴

Significantly, Pascual Díaz arrived in Rome in April. By this time the bishop of Tabasco believed that a solely Catholic government could not succeed in Mexico, because it would not receive support from the United States. He was also convinced that the LNDR would never agree to surrender its leadership or broaden the character of the resistance movement. Feeling that the Cristero rebellion was doomed to failure, Díaz was unsympathetic toward de la Peza's mission. This attitude placed the bishop of Tabasco at odds with the other Mexican prelates in Rome.²⁵

As de la Peza sought assistance for the Cristero rebellion, the Calles government took additional steps to end Catholic resistance. During the spring of 1927 the Department of War intensified its military efforts and issued an order of no quarter to the rebels. Secretary Tejeda believed that the presence of clergymen in especially turbulent areas such as Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán served as an encouragement to the Cristeros. Accordingly,

²⁴ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 131-132; Mexican Bishops' Commission to José Mora y del Río and other archbishops and bishops, n.d., LA:44; Mexican Bishops' Commission to William F. Buckley, 15 April 1927, LA:44; Mexican Bishops' Commission to Nicholas T. Brady, 15 April 1927, LA:44.

²⁵ Mexican Bishops' Commission to José Mora y del Río and other archbishops and bishops, n.d. LA:44; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 129-130; Dooley, "The Cristeros," pp. 158-159.

he ordered the detention of priests in these states and began a policy of transferring them to major urban centers where their movements could be watched. But, there were isolated incidents in which priests who were apprehended in the countryside were shot by overly zealous federal soldiers. To protect their subordinates, the episcopate ordered members of the lower clergy to leave outlying areas and move to safety in the cities. Nevertheless, approximately one hundred priests voluntarily chose to remain in dangerous areas. Of these, fifteen served as chaplains to the insurgents and another twenty-five were directly or indirectly implicated in the revolution.²⁶

The tenacity of the Cristeros in Jalisco prompted the authorities there to take drastic action. On April 1 several Catholics suspected of complicity in the rebellion were arrested. Anacleto González Flores, a popular leader of guerrilla activity in the Los Altos region, was one of the men taken into custody. He was questioned, tortured, condemned, and executed. On April 19 a rebel band, seeking revenge for the death of González Flores, derailed, robbed, and burned a train enroute from Mexico City to Guadalajara. More than one hundred passengers and crewmen lost their lives in an incident which the government labeled an

²⁶ Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 26(1927):138; Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:39-41, 43.

atrocity. Secretary of War Joaquín Amaro realized that many campesinos in Jalisco aided the Cristeros, who were largely dependent on popular assistance, by providing them with food, supplies, and shelter. To halt this assistance to the Jaliscan revolutionaries, Amaro ordered the evacuation of the Los Altos and Lagos regions. Within a fixed period of time everyone living in these areas was required to move to a specified zone controlled by federal troops. Anyone remaining in the forbidden regions would be executed. This relocation policy met with heavy resistance. But, it was enforced in Jalisco and later applied, to a lesser degree, in other areas where the civilian population evidenced support for the rebels.²⁷

The April 19 Cristero attack on the Mexico City-Guadalajara train had severe repercussions for the episcopate. Surviving passengers testified that the bandits, who had shouted "Viva Cristo Rey," were led by three priests. Presented with this testimony, General José Alvarez, who was investigating the incident, concluded that the robbery had been "organized by the Catholic Episcopate." Calles agreed with this conclusion and ordered the arrests of Archbishop Mora y del Río, Archbishop Ruiz y Flores and

²⁷Moctezuma, Conflict religioso, 2:456; Dooley, "The Cristeros," pp. 168-172; Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 394; Olivera Sedano, Conflict religioso, p. 183, 212; Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:172-175.

four bishops. The archbishop of Mexico refuted the charges, but argued that Mexican Catholics could "fight for their rights by peaceful means first and with arms in an extremity." Secretary of Gobernación Tejeda considered this statement additional proof of the hierarchy's guilt. And, the six prelates were given second class tickets on a train to Laredo. They eventually found their way to San Antonio, which became the headquarters for the exiled members of the hierarchy.²⁸

In several cases individual prelates, whether in exile or in Mexico, did what they could to assist the Catholic resistance movement. For example, José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate, although he claimed to be the poorest of the prelates, supplied the rebels with "elementos de guerra" and gave money to the League's representatives in the United States. Additionally, as discussed earlier, the three members of the Mexican Bishops' Commission in Rome backed the LNDR and the Cristeros. But, the episcopate as a body followed a policy of avoiding any action that would directly implicate it in the rebellion. It cheered for the insurgents and condoned their actions, but refused to offer them more substantial assistance. Because the League

²⁸ Hackett, "Mexico," CH 26:472; Ruiz y Flores, Recuerdo de recuerdos, pp. 86-88; Mecham, Church and State, p. 400.

was desperate, Luis Bustos on June 30 appealed to Church officials for money. He explained that the LNDLR must have \$500,000 within a month to sustain the Cristero revolution. He warned that "if the Mexican episcopate doesn't help us economically, Religion and Civilization have died in Mexico." Despite this warning, Archbishop Mora and some fifteen bishops opposed compromising the Church by providing the requested funds. The prelates consequently informed Bustos that they could only dispose of ecclesiastical monies and properties at the express order of the Holy See.²⁹

Although his personal feelings toward the Cristero movement were ambiguous, Pascual Díaz y Barreto, who had returned from Rome to the United States, told reporters that Pius XI was confident that "the Calles Government must fall" and the Catholic Church "regain her old standing" in Mexico. However, facts belied the pope's confidence. The death of critical local leaders, the paucity of "elementos de guerra," the absence of financial resources, and the stubbornness of the Calles regime had taken a heavy toll upon the Cristeros by the summer of 1927. In fact, Current History, a journal published in the

²⁹ Jose' de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate, bishop of Huejutla, to José María González Valencia, archbishop of Durango, 18 July 1927, LA:44; Manríquez y Zárate, 1:116, 137; Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, pp. 97-99; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 147-150.

United States, commented at the time that "the first year without services in the Catholic churches of Mexico ended on July 31, and the victory of the Government appeared to be even more complete than was the case over a year ago."³⁰

Concerned Mexicans knew that the rebellion was endangered. Because it was imperative to create a united army from the disorganized guerrilla bands at war with the State, LNDLR directors accepted the resignation of René Capistrán Garza as head of the resistance movement and decided to appoint qualified military commanders to assume control of rebel activity in critical zones. In May Jesús Degollado Guízar, a zealous Jaliscan Catholic, was appointed chief of operations for southern Jalisco, Colima, Nayarit, and western Michoacán. Then, in July League officials named Enrique Gorostieta, who had attended the Military College of Chapultepec, as commander of Cristero forces in Jalisco. The appointments of Degollado and Gorostieta to key positions of military leadership gradually gave new life to the Catholic revolution.³¹

³⁰ Hackett, "Mexico," CH 26:958; Ernest Gruening, Mexico and Its Heritage (New York: Century Co., 1929), p. 286; Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, pp. 182-184, 192.

³¹ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 146; Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, pp. 187-188, 191-192; Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:199-201.

Some Mexicans, including a few members of the LNDLR, felt that the Cristero rebellion with its overwhelmingly Catholic appearance faced insurmountable odds unless serious changes were made. This faction, headed by Alberto María Carreño, Luis Bustos, and José Ortiz Monasterio, wanted to modify the character of the resistance movement to increase its appeal and attract new adherents. During the summer of 1927, the three men advocated the formation of a political party that would seek the reestablishment of the Constitution of 1857, freedom of conscience, effective suffrage and no reelection, and the betterment of the condition of the working classes. Additionally, while preserving Mexican autonomy, the proposed party would reach a friendly understanding with and gain the backing of the United States' government. For obvious reasons this plan appealed to bishop Díaz. However, the episcopate's determination to avoid direct participation in political affairs prevented him from actively promoting the project. Furthermore, key leaders of the League evidenced little enthusiasm for the proposal, and the LNDLR as an organization failed to support the National Union Party, which was officially formed in November.³²

During the summer of 1927, Alvaro Obregón sponsored

³² Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 150-153; Dooley, "The Cristeros," p. 183; Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, pp. 336-338, 342-343.

another attempt to resolve peacefully the Church-State conflict. Acting on the orders of the ex-president, Eduardo Mestre in mid-July contacted members of the Mexican episcopate who were still in Mexico. He assured them that the government could not abruptly revoke controversial legislation; for, it would lose prestige by doing so. However, he claimed to have a formula that would enable the State to maintain its dignity and also permit the clergy to return to the churches. Mestre explained that Calles would appoint a mixed commission to study Mexico's religious laws and propose suitable reforms to Congress, which would act accordingly. While the commission was making its study, the president would suspend enforcement of the laws under consideration and the clergy would resume public worship. Mestre asked the bishops in Mexico for their reactions to his proposal and told them that he would soon go to the United States to present this same proposal to the exiled prelates.³³

The LNDLR consistently opposed this or any other negotiated settlement that involved a compromise on the part of the Church. The organization warned the episcopate that Mestre hoped to gain a ministerial post by courting favor with Obregón, who had announced his candidacy for

³³President of the Episcopal Sub-Committee to members of the Episcopal Sub-Committee, 15 July 1927, LA:44.

the presidency in 1928. Mestre's solution was a superficial one that left major questions unresolved. And, serious consideration of his proposal would not only hurt the prestige of the hierarchy but also endanger the effectiveness of the resistance movement. The League then reminded the bishops that the government desired the subjugation of the Church to the State and insisted that Calles' promise to suspend Mexico's religious laws did not deserve "the privilege of being called [a] 'word of honor.'"³⁴

The bishops in Mexico claimed to appreciate the spirit of good will that might promote a Church-State accord, but they felt it imprudent and dangerous to resume public worship before the constitution with its threat to the spiritual independence of the Church was reformed. They informed Mestre that constitutional reform must precede the resumption of public worship. The prelates advised that the road to peace could be paved by restoring the rights of the Mexican people and "no castigar a nadie" for defending his faith.³⁵

In spite of this negative response to his proposal,

³⁴Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:71; Directive Committee of LNDLR to Episcopal Sub-Committee, 17 July 1927, LA:44.

³⁵Miscellaneous document, 18 July 1927, LA:44.

Mestre and Aaron Sáenz, the governor-elect of Nuevo León, went to San Antonio and conferred in secrecy with the Mexican bishops in that city. The prelates disclosed that Pius XI would have to approve any agreement between Church and State and asked the two men to present a written statement explaining the government's position on the religious crisis. At a subsequent meeting Mestre presented the requested statement to Archbishop Mora, Bishop Díaz, and Bishop Ignacio Valdespino y Díaz. It assured that the registration of priests was a mere formality, professed that the State would not interfere in religious matters, and asked the episcopate not to obstruct the work of the civil authorities in Mexico. The bishops asked Mestre to sign the document, which was to be forwarded to Rome. Mestre refused and explained that the settlement, if approved by the pope, would be an informal gentlemen's agreement between Church and State.³⁶

The press learned of the presence of Sáenz and Mestre in San Antonio and of their dealings with the episcopate. Newspapers in Mexico began to speculate whether a Church-State accord was imminent. These speculations disturbed

³⁶ José Mora y del Río, archbishop of Mexico, to José María González, Martín Tritschler, Emeterio Valverde Téllez, and Genaro Méndez, 3 September 1927, LA:44; Robert E. Quirk, The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1910-1929 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 210.

avid anticlericals and staunch revolutionaries who felt that the only acceptable solution to the Mexican religious crisis was clerical submission to civil authority. These Mexicans wanted the government to stand fast and refuse to compromise with the Church. Aware that many of his constituents felt this way, Calles on August 8 insisted that he had not authorized any attempt to invite the exiled bishops back to Mexico and vowed that laws concerning religion would remain unchanged. Likewise, presidential-hopeful Obregón for reasons of political expediency denied any involvement in intrigues with the hierarchy. In his campaign speeches during this period, Obregón, while privately seeking a negotiated settlement, presented an unyielding attitude toward the clergy.³⁷

Direct and indirect participants in the resistance movement in Mexico were also disturbed by recurring rumors of a possible religious accord. The LNDLR was especially concerned that a Church-State agreement would undermine the Cristero rebellion and render impossible a total victory over Calles. Consequently, League representative José Serrano Orozco on September 27 presented Pius XI with a petition stating that Mexican Catholics wanted no less than the actual repeal of persecutory laws. Stressing that

³⁷ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 158-160; Dooley, "The Cristeros," p. 188.

negotiations with the Calles government were premature and unnecessary, the petition declared that the perseverance of the heroic resistance movement in Mexico would bring "el triunfo completo y definitivo."³⁸

González Valencia, who from Rome kept a finger on the pulse of his archdiocese, knew that pro-clerics in Mexico desired a definitive victory for the Church rather than a compromise with the State. To reassure his followers and reaffirm their faith, he issued a pastoral letter on October 7. Referring to disturbing rumors of an accord not based on the repeal of Mexico's religious laws, he assured his people that they had nothing to fear. He asked them to remember the episcopate's collective pastoral of July 25, 1926, in which the prelates had pledged not to resume public worship until Calles' Law was reformed. The archbishop gently chastized his parishioners for thinking that the hierarchy would forget this pledge and reminded them that Pius XI had instructed the Mexican clergy to remain firm in their stand. He then asked the faithful if they believed

that after so much blood and so many tears, so many heroisms and so many sacrifices, it would be us who would close the door to the full victory of Christ. If we did such a thing our martyrs and our heroes would arise from their tombs to reclaim the

³⁸ Manríquez y Zárate, 1:214.

squandering of their glorious blood. 39

After making this moving declaration, Archbishop González repeated the vow of the episcopate to work unstintingly for the repeal of Calles' Law.⁴⁰

In October Fumasoni Biondi, apostolic delegate to the United States, instructed Pascual Díaz to return to Rome. The bishop arrived at a critical time when the papacy was beginning to doubt the validity of armed force in solving the Church's problems in Mexico. As mentioned previously, the members of the Mexican Bishops' Commission supported the resistance movement, but Díaz was disillusioned with the LNDR and the Cristero rebellion. Apparently high Church officials were more receptive to Díaz' point of view. Secretary Pietro Gasparri decided that Archbishop González Valencia and his associates had been presenting the Vatican with misleading reports that exaggerated the potential of the Catholic revolution in Mexico. Consequently, in November the secretary of state ordered the Mexican Bishops' Commission to disband. Shortly thereafter Bishop Díaz left Rome for the United States.⁴¹

³⁹ Gallegos, Apuntes, p. 24; José María González y Valencia, archbishop of Durango, to Catholic organizations, clergy, et al., 7 October 1927, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 1.

⁴⁰ Gallegos, Apuntes, p. 24.

⁴¹ Quirk, Mexican Revolution, p. 211; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 180-181.

In the same month that the Mexican Bishops' Commission in Rome was ordered to disband, an attempt was made on the life of Alvaro Obregón in Mexico. On November 13, 1927, Obregón and two friends were riding through Chapultepec Park in an escorted Cadillac. Four men in an Essex drew along side Obregón's car, threw two bombs at it, and fired several shots. Although the Cadillac received heavy damages, its passengers escaped with minor injuries. Obregón's escorts immediately began to pursue the Essex, which was disabled during the heated chase. Juan Tirado and fatally-wounded Nahum Lambertino Ruiz were captured, but two other would-be assassins escaped. The next day police officers arrested a suspect, Luis Segura Vilchis. An active member of the LNDLR and an avid supporter of the Cristeros, Segura Vilchis had, without doubt as events proved, instigated the attempt on Obregón's life. Despite his guilt, he managed to produce a convincing alibi and obtain his freedom. The police then traced the registration of the Essex to another League member, Humberto Pro Juárez. On November 18 Humberto and his brothers, Roberto and Miguel, were taken into custody. The three men protested their innocence and claimed to have reliable alibis, but the authorities were convinced of their guilt. Miguel, a Jesuit priest, had long defied the law by clandestinely performing marriages,

baptizing children, and conducting masses. He was accused of being the intellectual director of the murder plot. In the interests of justice, Segura Vilchis went to police headquarters, confessed his own guilt, and tried to absolve the Pro brothers. However, his gesture proved futile. Calles and Obregón believed all the suspects to have been involved in the assassination attempt and decided to make an example of them. Without benefit of a trial Segura Vilchis, Tirado, and the Pro brothers were condemned to death.⁴²

On November 23 the condemned men with the exception of Roberto Pro Juárez, who received a last-minute reprieve, were executed one at a time. Miguel Pro Juárez was the first to face the firing squad. Refusing a blindfold, he defiantly extended his arms so that his body formed a cross and shouted "Viva Cristo Rey." Ironically the execution of the priest, as reported by the Mexican newspapers, did set an example for the Mexican people, but it was not the kind of example desired by Calles and Obregón. The courage and faith of the Jesuit in the face of death served as an inspiration to militant Catholics

⁴²Johnson, Heroic Mexico, pp. 398-399; Dooley, "The Cristeros," pp. 191-195; Mario Mena, Alvaro Obregón: Historia militar y política, 1912-1929 (México: Editorial Jus, 1960), pp. 118-123; Quirk, Mexican Revolution, pp. 212-213; Wilfrid Parsons, Mexican Martyrdom, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1936), pp. 42-43, 49-50.

and steeled them in their resolve to overthrow the government.⁴³

In December, 1927, the LNDLR compiled a report summarizing Cristero military activity for the past year. It stated that 25,000 men in eighteen states had fought on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church. The League's directors forwarded this statistical information to the Mexican bishops and promised that the armed resistance movement would persevere as long as it received their benedictions, prayers, and encouragement.⁴⁴ The Cristeros fulfilled their promise. In the end, their rebellion was defeated not by federal armies but by a negotiated settlement between Church and State.

⁴³ Dooley, "The Cristeros," p. 195; Parsons, Mexican Martyrdom, pp. 41, 52-53; Quirk, Mexican Revolution, p. 213; Johnson, Heroic Mexico, pp. 399-400.

⁴⁴ Special Bulletin, LNDLR, "Resumen de la situación militar en la república durante el mes de diciembre de 1927," CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 1; Degollado Guízar, Memorias, pp. 259-263; Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, p. 185.

CHAPTER V

STALEMATE

As the Cristero rebellion entered its second year in 1928, the Mexican government initiated new measures to repress it. In February Secretary of War Joaquín Amaro declared a blockade around Jalisco, Michoacán, Colima, and Aguascalientes. Assuming personal command of approximately ten thousand federal troops in these turbulent states, he initiated an offensive campaign of cavalry, artillery, and aerial attacks. He then demanded the unconditional surrender of the rebels but promised safe conduct to those laying down their arms. Although a small percentage of Cristeros accepted these terms, the vast majority defiantly continued their crusade.¹

Ironically, while the rebels stubbornly defended their faith, the Holy See worked to disassociate the Church from the Cristero movement. In January of 1928 Pascual Díaz y Barreto, recently appointed official intermediary for the Vatican, advised the LNDR that its conduct should not provide a pretext for attacks upon the Church in

¹ Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," Current History 28(1928): 121, 672 (hereafter cited as CH); Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, trans. Aurelio Garzón del Camino, 2d ed. (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1964), vol. 1, La guerra de los Cristeros, pp. 246-248.

Mexico. While asserting that Pius XI did not want to infringe upon the League's right to work for the welfare of the Mexican nation, the bishop of Tabasco stressed to the Directive Committee the critical distinction between religious/social activities and political/belligerent activities. For the League to be a truly effective agent of Catholic Action, Díaz explained, it must not only restrict itself to religious/social activities but also change its name, program, and leadership.²

Díaz' message stunned the LNDLR, and it took more than a month to formulate its reply. In March the Directive Committee informed the bishop, and through him the Holy See, that the Cristero movement was steadily gaining strength. The committee warned that the rebellion would be thrown into a state of anarchy if the League suddenly changed its character and abandoned its active defense of the Church; therefore, the organization could not comply with Díaz' requests. Having justified their refusal to effect the suggested changes, the directors asked to be consulted should the papacy enter into negotiations with the Mexican government. They explained their desire "to determine the political guarantees, that assure not only

²David C. Bailey, "Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico," (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1974), pp. 181-183.

the rights of the Church but also . . . [the rights] of those who fight with arms in hand for the liberty of the same Church"³ Significantly the Holy See did not respond to this communique from the LNDLR.⁴

Bishop Leopoldo Lara y Torres of Tacámbaro, like members of the LNDLR and the Cristero army, hoped that a military victory would alter the fate of the Mexican Church. While he acknowledged that a "true" religious accord assuring peace and liberty was desirable, he believed that the Calles administration would break any promises that it made to the clergy. And, Lara y Torres feared that a negotiated settlement would dishearten Catholics who had sacrificed on behalf of the Church and cause them to lose faith in the episcopate. He informed his fellow bishops of his apprehensions and tried to persuade them to maintain their faith in the armed resistance movement. Arguing that the future of the Church in México should be decided on the battlefield rather than in the conference room, the prelate confidently assured that the Mexican government was growing weaker every day because of Cristero "triumphs."⁵

³Alberto María Carreño, El arzobispo de México: Exmo. sr. dr. don Pascual Díaz y el conflicto religioso, 2d ed. rev. (Mexico: Ediciones Victoria, 1943), p. 65; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 184-185.

⁴Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 185.

⁵Leopoldo Lara y Torres to P. Joaquín Sáenz,

Despite the apprehensions of Bishop Lara y Torres, the LNDR, and the Cristeros, the Church and State in the spring of 1928 moved toward a peaceful reconciliation of their differences. Dwight Morrow, James Sheffield's replacement as United States ambassador to Mexico, was instrumental in bringing about negotiations. Sincerely interested in the Mexican people and their problems, Morrow requested and received from Secretary of State Frank Kellogg permission to engage in an unofficial attempt to persuade Plutarco Elías Calles to act more reasonably toward the Church and its clergy. Accordingly, in early February the ambassador advised the president to seek a resolution of the religious conflict, which was delaying the fulfillment of revolutionary plans for the betterment of Mexico. Calles replied that controversial religious laws could not be reformed or repealed, but indicated that he would enforce these laws in a reasonable manner as long as the Catholic clergy stayed out of politics. Asserting that his government did not wish to control the spiritual functions of the Church, the president declared his willingness to meet with "any liberal minded

16 February 1928, and Leopoldo Lara y Torres to secretary of Episcopal Sub-Committee, 27 February 1928, in Leopoldo Lara y Torres, Documentos para la historia de la persecución religiosa en México de Mons. Leopoldo Lara y Torres: Primer obispo de Tacámbaro (México: Editorial Jus, 1954), pp. 228-238, 239-246, *passim*.

person who could discuss the question with serenity."

Morrow conveyed this information to the Department of State in the United States. Interested private parties in that country then assumed the initiative.⁶

Father John Burke, a prominent American cleric and official of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), resolved to act as intermediary between the Mexican episcopate and Calles. In a letter of March 29 the priest advised Calles that the Catholic clergy would return to the churches in Mexico if the president would assure them that neither he nor the constitution aimed to destroy the Church and that extreme enforcement of religious laws would be avoided.⁷ With Morrow's assistance Burke and William Montavon, another NCWC official, arranged to meet personally with Calles in Mexico in early April. At this meeting Burke explained that he lacked official papal authorization to conclude a settlement. But, he stressed that Pius XI desired a religious accord that would allow the clergy simultaneously to maintain their dignity and resume public worship. During the course

⁶ L. Ethan Ellis, "Dwight Morrow and the Church-State Controversy in Mexico," Hispanic American Historical Review 38 (1958):485-486.

⁷ John J. Burke to Plutarco Elías Calles, 29 March 1928, in Emilio Portes Gil, Quince años de política mexicana, 3d ed. (México: Ediciones Libería Botas, 1954), pp. 317-318.

of the conference, Calles made several belligerent remarks about the Catholic clergy in Mexico. Nevertheless, he gave Burke a letter which stated that it was not "the intention of the Constitution or of the laws, nor . . . [of himself], to destroy the identity of any Church, nor to meddle in any way, in its spiritual functions."⁸ This letter, dated April 4, also contained the president's assurance that his sole interest was to see that Mexico's laws were applied "with a reasonable spirit and without any passion."⁹

In a similar vein, Manuel Puig Casauranc delivered a speech at Celaya on April 16 in which he expressed reverence for Mexico's traditional faith and denied that the Mexican government wished to erase the Roman Catholic religion. Both Calles and Alvaro Obregón were present when the secretary of education delivered this public address, which contemporaries interpreted as an "Olive Branch" offering to the Church.¹⁰ Pascual Díaz, for example, claimed to see in Casauranc's words "evidence of the desire which of late, the Calles government has manifested to return to the afflicted Catholic people of

⁸ Plutarco Elías Calles to John J. Burke, 4 April 1928, in Portes Gil, Quince años, pp. 318-319; Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," pp. 488-489.

⁹ Portes Gil, Quince años, pp. 318-319.

¹⁰ Hackett, "Mexico," CH 28:478; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 197.

Mexico . . . their right to the free exercise of their religion. . . . "¹¹ The Bishop expressed his hope that the new attitude of the Calles administration would facilitate a Church-State agreement "in which the honor of neither side need be sacrificed, nor the rights of conscience violated. . . ." ¹²

Suspecting that the Cristero rebellion was a lost cause and that insistence upon legal reforms was futile, the Holy See was also pleased by the Mexican government's new, conciliatory attitude. Because the papacy realized that the acquiescence of the Mexican hierarchy was prerequisite to any Church-State accord, Apostolic Delegate Pietro Fumasoni Biondi asked Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores to determine the sentiments of his fellow bishops in regard to a negotiated settlement. In their discussion of the matter members of the Episcopal Committee revealed diverse opinions. Personal distaste for Calles, lack of faith in his promises, consideration of the wishes of militant laymen, and faith in the Cristero movement made several bishops reluctant to bargain with the State. Other prelates, however, wanted to resume public worship in Mexico as soon as possible. If this could be accomplished only through negotiations, they were receptive to

¹¹ Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, p. 212-213.

¹² Ibid., p. 213.

to the idea. Although divided in opinion as to the advisability of negotiating with Calles, most of the bishops agreed that the papacy should reject any agreement that did not contain more explicit guarantees for the Church than those made in the Calles/Burke exchange on April 4. The Episcopal Committee ultimately informed Fumasoni Biondi that it would accept any decision made by the Holy See, but asked that Rome insist at least upon the return of confiscated Church properties and amnesty provisions for Catholic rebels and exiles.¹³

On April 22, 1928, Archbishop José Mora y del Río died in exile. Three days later the Episcopal Committee elected the more moderate Archbishop Ruiz y Flores as its new president. Again utilizing his persuasive powers, Dwight Morrow convinced Calles to meet with Ruiz y Flores, who, accompanied by Father Burke, traveled in secrecy to Mexico. At a series of conferences held in mid-May Calles quickly revealed that his willingness to negotiate did

¹³ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 199-200; Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," p. 490; "Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, Católico militante," in James W. Wilkie and Edna Monzón de Wilkie, México visto en el siglo XX: Entrevistas de historia oral (México: Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones Económicas, 1969), p. 446; New York Times, 12 June 1929, p. 4. An example of episcopal opposition to a negotiated settlement may be found in a letter from Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, Miguel de la Mora y Mora, and Leopoldo Lara y Torres to the most Holy Father, 16 June 1928 (Lara y Torres, Documentos, pp. 271-276),

not imply a willingness to make significant compromises.

The president insisted that the Catholic priests, when they resumed public worship, would be subject to existing religious laws. While he offered to state publicly that these laws would be applied in a reasonable manner, he refused to make any other concessions or promises. At the conclusion of these conferences Ruiz y Flores traveled to Rome to acquaint the Holy See with Calles' position. In the Eternal City the archbishop conferred with Secretary of State Pietro Gasparri and had audiences with Pius XI, who expressed his desire that the Mexican episcopate accept "con agrado" any pact concluded between Church and State.¹⁴

Throughout the spring and early summer of 1928 alarmed Mexican Catholics begged the Vatican to avoid a reconciliation with the Calles administration. In a March meeting at Los Altos, Jalisco, Cristero officers concluded that the religious conflict could be satisfactorily resolved only by a definitive military victory. They communicated their feelings to the papacy. In May twelve distinct Catholic societies, including the LNDR,

¹⁴ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 198-199, 201-203; Jesús García Gutiérrez, Acción anticatólica en México, 3d ed. (México: Editorial Jus, 1959), p. 179; [Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores], Recuerdo de recuerdos: Autobiografía de excmo. y rdmo. dr. don Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, arzobispo de Morelia y asistente al solio pontificio (México: "Buena Prensa," 1942), pp. 89-90.

the ACJM, and the Knights of Columbus, petitioned Pius XI. They warned that Calles was not offering any meaningful concessions to the Church and that, even if he did make tempting promises, he would never keep them. The signators of the petition urgently declared that laymen did not want a peace achieved at the cost of the disappearance of the Catholic faith, the inevitable result of any agreement with the Calles regime. Then, in June Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, still in hiding in his archdiocese in Mexico, addressed a letter to Rome. He stressed that the Mexican clergy and laity opposed any solution of the religious conflict that was not based upon the actual repeal or reform of all persecutory laws. Pointing out the defects and dangers inherent in any compromise with the government, the archbishop insisted that the Cristero movement by forcing the State to recognize and respect the rights of the Church was proving successful. After expressing his opposition to a religious accord, Orozco y Jiménez added that he would accept any settlement deemed suitable by the Holy See.¹⁵

¹⁵ Alicia Olivera Sedano, Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929: Sus antecedentes y consecuencias (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1966), pp. 229, 232; Cristóbal Rodríguez, La iglesia católica y la rebelión cristera en México, 1926-1929 (México: Editorial la Voz de Juárez, 1960), pp. 234-237; Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, archbishop of Guadalajara, to the most Holy Father, 16 June 1928, fondo XV, "Conflicto religioso, 1910-1929," carpeta 1, Centro de Estudios de Historia de

Like concerned Catholics in Mexico, the papacy realized the possible dangers of a hasty settlement with the Calles government. Therefore, the Holy See resolved to reject any agreement that failed to include amnesty provisions for the Cristeros, strong safeguards for the bishops upon their return to Mexico, and more explicit guarantees for the Church itself.¹⁶ This decision meant that additional negotiations were necessary for the Church and State to reconcile their contradictory positions and achieve an accord.

By the summer of 1928 Calles' term in office was nearing an end. As his successor, he endorsed the popular General Alvaro Obregón, who easily won the presidential election held in July. Mexicans who favored a peaceful resolution of the religious conflict were pleased by the results of the election, because Obregón in the past had evidenced an apparently sincere desire to arrange for the resumption of public worship. They hoped that, even if no agreement could be reached while Calles was in power, one would soon follow when the president-elect assumed office. A sudden, tragic event shattered those hopes.¹⁷

México, Departamento Cultural de Condumex, S. A., México, D.F. (hereafter cited as CEHM).

¹⁶ Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," p. 492.

¹⁷ William Weber Johnson, Heroic Mexico: The Violent Emergence of a Modern Nation (Garden City, New York:

On July 17, 1928, Obregón was assassinated by José León Toral, a fanatical member of the LNDLR and the ACJM. A nun, Concepción Acevedo de la Llata, was accused of being the intellectual instigator of the act. In a press statement to the Mexican people on July 19, Calles declared that Toral had been motivated by religious fervor and that evidence revealed clerical complicity in the assassination. Staunch Obregonistas were skeptical, however. They suspected that the president-elect's political enemies had actually instigated his murder. Because of his vocal opposition to Obregón's presidential candidacy, Secretary Luis Morones was a prime suspect. Morones' important cabinet position and his close ties with Calles caused suspicion to fall upon the president, who endeavored to clear himself. He not only accepted the resignations of Morones and two other discredited cabinet members but also appointed General Antonio Ríos Zertuche, a man of impeccable integrity, to investigate the assassination. Finally, Calles did everything possible to persuade his countrymen that Obregón's death was the result of religious fanaticism rather than political intrigue. Because most Mexicans ultimately accepted this fact,

Doubleday & Company, 1968), p. 400, 402; Francis Patrick Dooley, "The Cristeros, Calles and Mexican Catholicism" (Ph. D. diss., University of Maryland, 1972), p. 212; The Commonweal, 27 June 1928, p. 199.

Mexico experienced a resurgence of anticlericalism that effectively postponed any possibility for a religious accord.¹⁸

Although anticlericalism was on the rise during the summer of 1928, at least one key government official, Emilio Portes Gil, opposed the trend. In August Calles appointed Portes Gil, a lawyer of rising popularity, as secretary of gobernación to replace Adalberto Tejeda. At the time of his appointment the thirty-seven year old Tamaulipan was governor of his home state where he had enforced agrarian reform, championed the rights of labor, improved public education, and applied existing religious laws. Upon assuming the secretariat, Portes Gil advised the president that the fundamental problem within Mexico was the Church-State conflict, which should be resolved if at all possible. While bemoaning the fanaticism of the Catholic masses, he insisted that the government "should not combat violence with violence, but by educational means." The new secretary denounced the excessive manner in which religious laws had been applied in the past. Citing cases in which state and federal officials had sacked the homes of innocent parties, appropriated

¹⁸ Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, pp. 219, 221; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 28(1928):1026; El Universal (Mexico City), 19 July 1928; 29 July 1928; Portes Gil, Quince años, pp. 23, 25-27, 31-33; Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," p. 492; Dooley, "The Cristeros," p. 222; New York Times, 12 June 1929, p. 4.

valuable religious objects, and extracted protection money from intimidated Catholics, he argued that these abuses must stop. Calles informed Portes Gil that Mexico's religious laws must be enforced, but gave him permission to effect a "política de conciliación" to lessen tension between the government and Mexican Catholics. Consequently, the secretary of gobernación instructed his subordinates to remain strictly within the law and to avoid acts of violence.¹⁹

By the fall of 1928 Mexico's religious problems were overshadowed by other considerations. With Obregón's death the question of presidential succession became paramount. As originally written, the Constitution of 1917 had prohibited reelection to the executive office. A later amendment allowed for reelection but prohibited anyone from serving two consecutive terms as president. Under this provision Calles was ineligible to remain in office after November 30, 1928. Nevertheless, some Mexicans feared that the ambitious Sonoran might attempt to maintain himself in power by taking advantage of the confusion arising from the assassination of the president-elect. Calles, however, was too shrewd a politician to defy openly the revered constitution. In his annual

¹⁹Frank Brandenburg, The Making of Modern Mexico (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 63; Portes Gil, Quince Años, pp. 35-37, 297.

message to Congress on September 1, he announced his intention of retiring from office on schedule. He then recommended that the legislature select an interim president to head the nation until an election could be held and a legitimate successor to Obregón determined. Congress quickly acted upon Calles' suggestion. Meeting in a joint session on September 25, Mexican congressmen designated Secretary of Gobernación Emilio Portes Gil to assume the executive post on December 1. In his acceptance statement to the press, Portes Gil announced that he would continue the policies developed by the Calles administration.²⁰

While the matter of presidential succession was being determined, the Cristeros continued their war against the State. As part of an internal and external reorganization, the League in August designated Enrique Gorostieta as the first distinct leader of all rebel troops in Mexico. Upon assuming actual command in October, Gorostieta issued a manifesto to the nation. He commended the Mexican people for fighting valiantly to recover their rights, even though they had not yet attained a final victory. He reminded them that the LNDR

²⁰ Brandenburg, Modern Mexico, pp. 62-63; Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 405; L. Vincent Padgett, The Mexican Political System (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), p. 32; Portes Gil, Quince años, pp. 49, 51.

had assumed charge of the resistance movement, which lacked a visible military leader and program. To remedy this situation, the Directive Committee had decided to appoint a military chief of the liberation movement. Announcing that he had received the appointment, Gorostjeta proclaimed the Constitution of 1917, minus the Reform Laws, in effect in Mexico. The new military chief explained that he was forming the rebel forces in Mexico into a formal army, the National Guard, and pledged to fight until the goals embodied in the slogan of "God, Country, and Liberty" were achieved.²¹

By November the Holy See, while maintaining its willingness to negotiate with the Mexican government, explained that Pius XI would not authorize the resumption of public worship until the Church received more reasonable concessions than those offered to date.²² That same month the exiled members of the Mexican episcopate addressed a message to their followers in Mexico. Expressing their desire to extend "consuelo y aliento" to the faithful, the prelates insisted that the clerical withdrawal of 1926 had been a duty of conscience. The religious conflict could be terminated and the clergy returned to the churches,

²¹ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 234-235; Manifesto, Enrique Gorostjeta to the nation, 28 October 1929, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 1.

²² Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," p. 498.

they explained, only by "mutual respect, mutual concord, mutual benevolence, based . . . on a friendly independence between the church and the state."²³

During the last month of Calles' term, prospects for "a friendly independence between the church and the state" seemed negligible. The trials of José León Toral and Concepción Acevedo de la Llata for the murder of Obregón had created a tense, hostile atmosphere in which anticlericalism thrived. Congress not only rejected new Catholic petitions for constitutional reform but also recommended that the government vigorously enforce legal provisions for the confiscation of Church property and promote an educational program to extricate Mexican women from clerical influence. Cognizant of the prevalent mood in the country, the president decided against participating in additional negotiations with churchmen. Contending that he could not make any binding guarantees because he was a lame-duck president, Calles bequeathed the religious problem and its ramifications to Emilio Portes Gil.²⁴

The religious crisis inherited by Portes Gil upon his

²³ Episcopal Committee to the clergy and faithful of the Republic, 21 November 1928, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 1.

²⁴ Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 29(1929):679-680; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 228.

inauguration showed no sign of alleviation during the early months of his term. When Toral was sentenced to death in February, 1929, the new president received petitions requesting a pardon for the convicted assassin, who was a hero to militant Catholics. Portes Gil also received warnings from members of the LNDLR that, if he did not stop the execution, he would be sorry. To both petitions and threats he replied that Toral had been condemned by a jury and that his case had been unsuccessfully appealed. Voicing his respect for the Mexican judicial system, the executive refused to reprieve Obregón's murderer. Consequently, on February 9 amid public protests and demonstrations, Toral was executed.²⁵

On February 10, the day of Toral's burial, the presidential train was dynamited as it traveled through Guanajuato with Portes Gil and his family aboard, but the passengers escaped with minor injuries. Although religious fanatics had actually dynamited the train, Portes Gil blamed the assassination attempt on political agitators. He accused wealthy bourgeois Mexicans, who wanted to protect their traditional privileges, of exploiting the credibility of the Catholic masses and inciting them to

²⁵ Portes Gil, Quince años, pp. 299-303; Robert E. Quirk, The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1910-1929 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 238.

acts of violence. The president made it clear, however, that he would not allow reactionary elements to intimidate him or halt the progress of the Mexican Revolution. Although Portes Gil did not openly accuse the clergy of collusion in the attempt upon his life, the secretary of gobernación on February 12 ordered all Catholic priests to report their whereabouts to his department within fifteen days. The secretary explained that recent subversive activity within Mexico forced him to issue the order. Bishop Miguel de la Mora nevertheless labeled the directive unjust and persecutory, and several of the prelates still residing in Mexico refused to comply with the measure.²⁶

Significantly, unrest in Mexico during the early months of Portes Gil's interim presidency was not bred solely by religious discontent. In December of 1928 Calles advocated the formation of a national political party to unite the various elements of the Revolution and discipline local leaders who hindered the achievement of revolutionary goals. In accord with Calles' wishes the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) was organized. But, the ex-president's enemies distrusted his motives. They accurately conjectured that Calles intended to rule Mexico

²⁶ Portes Gil, Quince años, pp. 305-309; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 30(1929):142; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 239-241.

from behind the scenes while "puppets," nominated by the PNR, served in the presidency. These suspicions led several military officers and politicians to conspire against the government. Major figures in this conspiracy were the chiefs of military operations in Coahuila, Sonora, Durango, and Veracruz, respectively, José Gonzalo Escobar, Francisco R. Manzo, Francisco Urbalejo,
²⁷
and Jesús M. Aguirre.

With plans for a military rebellion already underway, José Escobar approached the LNDLR and the National Guard in February, 1929. In return for the support of these two groups, he promised upon assuming power to guarantee religious liberty in Mexico and incorporate the Cristeros into the Mexican army. Although the Directive Committee of the League and Enrique Gorostieta of the National Guard were wary of Escobar's promises, they accepted his proposal. Then, on March 3 the Renovator rebellion erupted. Nine days later Escobar issued a decree declaring Calles' Law of 1926 null and void. But, he failed to abolish constitutional Article 130, which was so abhorrent to militant Catholics. And, despite the pact between Escobar and Gorostieta, there was little actual

²⁷ Portes Gil, Quince Años, pp. 211, 228; Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 408; Henry Bamford Parkes, A History of Mexico, Sentry Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), p. 392; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 30:141.

collaboration or contact between the Renovators and the Cristeros. Acting autonomously, the National Guard took advantage of the turbulent situation in Mexico to launch a new offensive in Jalisco.²⁸

The government ably met the challenge hurled at it by the insurgents. Agrarianists were enlisted into the federal army to increase its size and strength. Calles assumed the position of secretary of war and devoted his energies to defeating his former revolutionary associates. Realizing that the Cristeros were benefiting from the government's preoccupation with the Escobar movement, he ordered General Saturnino Cedillo in late March to lead a division against the religious rebels in Jalisco and Guanajuato. Within a relatively short time the Mexican army managed to contain the Renovators and partially offset the gains of the National Guard.²⁹

Meanwhile, both the Vatican and the Mexican episcopate had expressed reservations about the Renovators, whose numbers included former revolutionaries sympathetic to

²⁸ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 242-244; Olivera Sedano, Conflicto religioso, p. 225; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 30:141, 325; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:286-289.

²⁹ Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, vol. 3, Los Cristeros, p. 51; Portes Gil, Quince años, pp. 86, 295; Brandenburg, Modern Mexico, p. 64; "Emilio Portes Gil, ex-presidente de México," in Wilkie and Wilkie, Entrevistas de historia oral, p. 505. According to Emilio Portes Gil, the Escobar rebellion encompassed approximately 30,000 men and lasted for seventy-five days (Portes Gil, Quince Años, p. 295).

Calles' religious policies. Viewing the present situation in Mexico as a civil war among anti-Catholic factions, the Holy See advised that "it is not admissible that Catholics help the rebel chiefs nor have confidence in them."³⁰ Members of the Mexican hierarchy also publicly condemned the military movement.³¹

Portes Gil either was unaware of the pact between Escobar and Gorostjeta or chose to feign ignorance in the matter. In an interview with a foreign correspondent on May 1, the president stated that the movement headed by Escobar, Aguirre, and Manzo had been occasioned by individual quest for power. After expressing his satisfaction that the Cristeros had not joined the militarists, Portes Gil called the religious rebels fanatics "under the direction of very . . . bad elements of the Catholic clergy." He then hastened to add that these "bad elements" did not represent the majority of the Catholic clergy, who were basically indifferent to the armed resistance movement. When the newsman asked the president about the possibility of his reaching an understanding with the Church, Portes Gil answered that the priests

³⁰ [Observador], La rebelión militar contra el gobierno legítimo del sr. presidente de la república, lic. d. Emilio Portes Gil, descrita por un observador (San Antonio, Texas, n. d.), pp. 63-64.

³¹ Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," p. 498.

might return to their posts at any time with the assurance that the government would not be hostile to them. But, they would be subject to Mexico's religious laws.³²

Archbishop Ruiz y Flores reacted favorably to Portes Gil's remarks. On May 2 he informed American newsmen that

the religious conflict in Mexico was not motivated by any cause that . . . [could not] be corrected by men of good will. As an affirmation of good will, the words of the President . . . [were] of much importance. The Church and its Ministers [were] . . . prepared to cooperate with him in every just and moral effort for the betterment of the Mexican people.³³

Proposing that the religious dispute be submitted to specially appointed representatives of the clergy and the government, the archbishop assured that Mexican Catholics would accept any agreement reached by the Church and the State.³⁴

Ruiz y Flores' overture of May 2 forced Portes Gil to decide whether to enter into serious negotiations with the Church and return the clergy to their posts. Conditions in Mexico at the time influenced his decision. In 1929 the Revolutionary Family was suffering from internal divisions, as evidenced by the Renovator rebellion. Portes Gil feared that reactionary groups might benefit from the

³² Portes Gil, Quince años, pp. 323-325.

³³ Ibid., pp. 319-320; Excelsior (Mexico City), 3 May 1929.

³⁴ Ibid.

dissension among revolutionaries; for, by the spring of 1929 approximately fifty thousand Cristeros were at war with the State. In the president's own estimate the religious civil war was costing some eight hundred to one thousand combined casualties each month. This loss of life was accompanied by the destruction of property and waste of valuable resources. Recognizing the need for peace and unity in Mexico, Portes Gil determined to end the long-lived Catholic resistance movement and announced a military effort to that end. However, he must have realized that a more humane and less costly means of defeating the Cristeros would be to end the legitimacy of their rebellion by making peace with the Church.³⁵

Since 1926 Calles' religious policies had resulted in a loss of international prestige for Mexico. Officials

³⁵ James W. Wilkie, "The Meaning of the Cristero Religious War," in James W. Wilkie and Albert L. Michaels, eds., Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval, 1910-1940 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 163-164; Portes Gil, Quince años, p. 330; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 30:449-500; Meyer, La Cristiada, 3:104; Enrique de Jesús Ochoa [Spectator], Los Cristeros del Volcán de Colima: Escenas de la lucha por la libertad religiosa en México, 2d ed., 2 vols. (México: Editorial Jus, 1961), 2:168. Sources disagree as to the number of Cristeros in the field as of May, 1929. Jean Meyer, author of a recent, authoritative, three-volume work on the Cristero movement, claims that 50,000 men were in arms when the Church and State commenced the negotiations that led to the religious accord of June 21, 1929. According to Meyer, approximately 25,000 rebels had been incorporated into the National Guard under the leadership of Enrique Gorostieta, and an equal number of Cristeros continued to operate as independent guerrillas. (Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:315).

and private citizens in Christian countries throughout the world had charged Calles with religious persecution and criticized his harsh treatment of the Catholic clergy. Furthermore, the three year clerical strike and resultant religious rebellion had proved embarrassing for the government of a nation that was actually, if nominally, more than ninety percent Catholic. Portes Gil doubtlessly hoped, therefore, that a Church-State accord would improve his country's international image and remove a source of embarrassment to his government.³⁶

Relevant also was the fact that in March of 1929 Dwight Morrow had renewed his personal efforts to encourage a resolution of the religious crisis. In April Bishop Manuel Echeverría had informed the ambassador that most members of the Mexican episcopate desired peace between Church and State. That same month Bishop Antonio Guízar Valencia had gone to Rome to inform the Holy See that the uncompromising attitude of militant churchmen was "untenable" and that a settlement should be negotiated with Portes Gil. Armed with the knowledge that a majority of the prelates were finally ready to deal with the government

³⁶ John Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America: A History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 395; Portes Gil, Quince Años, p. 35; Charles C. Cumberland, Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 281.

on a realistic basis, Morrow worked for the renewal of negotiations.³⁷

Significantly, the State had not compromised its demands in regard to the Roman Catholic Church and its clergy in Mexico. To the contrary, on May 1 the president had stated categorically that the priests upon their return to the churches would be subject to existing laws. Nevertheless, Archbishop Ruiz y Flores at the first opportunity had expressed the clergy's desire to cooperate with the government. This, added to information provided by Morrow, convinced Portes Gil that Church officials were ready to accept a settlement on his terms, which did not deviate significantly from those laid down by Calles in 1926. The State, then, had little to lose and much to gain by reaching an agreement with the Church; for, a religious accord would return institutional Catholicism to the Mexican people, debilitate the Cristero rebellion, strengthen Mexico internally, and improve her international image. With these considerations in mind the president decided to express public appreciation of Ruiz y Flores' press statement of May 2.

On May 8 Portes Gil informed the press that the Roman Catholic Church, as an institution, had not been involved in the recent Escobar rebellion. While expressing

³⁷ Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," pp. 496-498.

appreciation of Ruiz y Flores' statement that the Church was ready to cooperate with the State, the president explained that he could not meet officially with papal representatives, because the Republic of Mexico did not recognize the Holy See. However, he quickly added that nothing prevented him from discussing the interpretation of Mexico's religious laws with individual clergymen.³⁸

In the face of Portes Gil's overture, Ruiz y Flores sent thirty members of the Mexican episcopate a telegram in which he asked their approval for reopening negotiations. The prelates' responses revealed a climate of opinion different from that existing in the spring of 1928. By May, 1929, a significant majority of bishops wished to resume public worship in Mexico as quickly as possible, even if doing so entailed the acceptance of Portes Gil's terms.³⁹ Several factors had contributed to this shift in clerical opinion.

While he lived, Archbishop José Mora y del Río, as president of the Episcopal Committee, had favored militant action. He and Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, Leopoldo Lara y

³⁸ Excelsior, 8 May 1929; Portes Gil, Quince años, pp. 325-326.

³⁹ Excelsior, 15 May 1929; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 30:689; Carlos Pérez-Maldonado, El Obispado: Monumento histórico de Monterrey (Monterrey, México: Impresora del Norte, 1947), p. 221; Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," p. 498; Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, p. 68.

Torres, José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate, José María González Valencia, and Miguel de la Mora y Mora had strongly opposed the peace sentiments of their colleagues. With the death of Archbishop Mora, leadership of the Episcopal Committee passed to the less radical Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores. He and other moderates, like Pascual Díaz y Barreto, were increasingly prominent in the hierarchy as time passed. Militant bishops continued to object to a negotiated settlement, but their influence was not as great as it had been while Mora was alive.⁴⁰ And, by May of 1929 even some of the more aggressive prelates realized that the lessons of the past three years should not and could not be ignored.

Upon suspending public worship in 1926 the bishops had expected the faithful to pressure the government, force it to submit to Church demands, and return the clergy to their posts. The hierarchy had overestimated the numbers and strength of its supporters while underestimating the determination and stubbornness of Plutarco Elías Calles. Many Mexicans had seemed to "care little, or less, about the absence of a priest and his services." For reasons already discussed those who did care were often unwilling

⁴⁰ James W. Wilkie, "Cristero Religious War," pp. 161-163; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, 260-261; Wilfrid Parsons, Mexican Martyrdom (New York: Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 102.

or unable to support actively the Church in its contest with the government. A relatively small percentage of the Catholic population had propagandized, petitioned, boycotted, and rebelled. Fighting valiantly against superior odds, the Cristeros had proved to be an irritant to the State. But, Calles had steadfastly resisted all pressure and refused to moderate his demands. Bent upon subordinating the Church to the State, he had asserted repeatedly that the priests upon their return to the churches would be subject to Mexico's religious laws. Portes Gil, while less belligerent than his predecessor, imposed the same requirement. Furthermore, the interim president announced his determination to end the Cristero rebellion at all costs. Under these circumstances the more realistic members of the episcopate realized that the Catholic resistance movement would be no more successful in the future than it had been in the past. Popular action had not and would not return the priests to their posts. If the Church wished to resume public worship in Mexico, it would have to accept a negotiated settlement on the government's terms.⁴¹

By the spring of 1929 the episcopate feared the

⁴¹ Howard F. Cline, The United States and Mexico, rev. ed. (New York: Antheneum, 1963), p. 201; Brandenburg, Modern Mexico, p. 187; Cumberland, Mexico, p. 281; Ernest Gruening, Mexico and Its Heritage (New York: Century Co., 1929), p. 285; Olivera Sedano, Conflict religioso, p. 150.

consequences of prolonging the clerical strike in Mexico. The limited popular response to the suspension of public worship had revealed the tenuous position and decreased influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico. Additionally, since 1926 many Mexican Catholics had drifted away from their faith, and others had concluded that they could manage satisfactorily without the services of a priest. Alarmed by the harm that had been done to the souls of the faithful and to the prestige of the clergy, many prelates concluded that the tolerance of "innocuous laws" was a lesser evil than the "suspension . . . which had taken ignorance and religious indifference to a peak."⁴² A majority of the hierarchy, therefore, favored an immediate, peaceful resolution of the Mexican religious crisis.

Rebel leader Enrique Gorostieta, greatly upset by the attitude of the bishops, addressed a letter to them on May 16, 1929. He declared that newspaper stories about a possible religious accord affected the Cristeros "like a slap in the face" and dampened their enthusiasm. Insisting that the National Guard constituted a real threat to the government, he charged that Portes Gil hoped to end the rebellion by reaching an agreement with the clergy.

⁴² Gruening, Mexico, p. 285; Brandenburg, Modern Mexico, p. 187; Apostolic delegate to the Mexican episcopate, clergy, and people, 15 June 1929, in El Universal, 26 June 1929.

Gorostjeta insisted that the National Guard, which represented the people, should be allowed to resolve the present conflict in Mexico. Reminding the episcopate that its exiled members had been out of touch with public life in Mexico for two years, he warned that it would be a treacherous and unworthy act for the prelates to deal with the State without considering the needs and desires of the rebels.⁴³

The military leader of the liberation movement did not live long enough to see the episcopate ignore his pleas; for, he died in battle on June 2, 1929. Five days later Jesús Degollado Guízar addressed a manifesto to the Mexican nation. Because God in his inscrutability had allowed Gorostjeta to die, Degollado explained, the Directive Committee of the LNDLR had appointed him to assume command of the National Guard. Publishing posthumously Gorostjeta's letter of May 16, the new military chief subscribed to it and swore to fight "until seeing our essential liberties reconquered or perishing. . . ."⁴⁴

On June 2, the day of Gorostjeta's death, the Mexican newspaper Excelsior reported that Archbishop Ruiz y Flores,

⁴³ Enrique Gorostjeta to the Mexican prelates, 16 May 1929, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 1; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:316-320

⁴⁴ Olivera Sedano, Conflict religioso, p. 233; Manifesto, Jesús Degollado Guízar to the Mexican nation, 7 June 1929, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 1.

who had been appointed apostolic delegate to Mexico with full authority to negotiate with Portes Gil, would soon return to his homeland.⁴⁵ For almost three years public worship had been suspended in Mexico, and for nearly two and a half years the country had been torn by a religiously-motivated civil war. Each concerned with its own needs and priorities, the Mexican episcopate and the Portes Gil administration were finally ready in June of 1929 to discuss their differences calmly and reasonably in a serious attempt to restore peace to Mexico. Neither the Church nor the State felt obligated to consult with or adhere to the wishes of those militant Mexican Catholics who had been intimately involved in the events of the past three years.

⁴⁵ Excelsior, 1 June 1929; 2 June 1929; New York Times, 11 June 1929, p. 3.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONTROVERSIAL RELIGIOUS ACCORD

In early June, 1929, Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, accompanied by Bishop Pascual Díaz y Barreto, went to Mexico to negotiate with Emilio Portes Gil. The United States Department of State announced that none of its functionaries would participate in the upcoming negotiations. Despite this announcement, Dwight Morrow, who was in the United States for the marriage of his daughter Anne to Charles Lindbergh, chose to work in an unofficial capacity in behalf of a Church-State accord. Cutting his vacation short, the ambassador traveled part of the way to Mexico on the same train that carried Ruiz y Flores and Díaz y Barreto back to their homeland. Upon their arrival in the Mexican capital, the two prelates, who had no definite plan of action, made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe to pray for guidance in the coming days.¹

¹ [Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores], Recuerdo de recuerdos: Autobiografía del exmo. y rdm. sr. dr. don Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, arzobispo de Morelia y asistente al solio pontificio (México: "Buena Prensa," 1942), p. 94; Excelsior (Mexico City), 2 June 1929; El Universal (Mexico City), 6 June 1929; 7 June 1929; L. Ethan Ellis, "Dwight Morrow and the Church-State Controversy in Mexico," Hispanic American Historical Review 38(1958):501; New York Times, 11 June, 1929, p. 3.

Staying at the residence of the American naval attaché, the two bishops refused to receive other members of the Mexican episcopate. However, they were visited frequently by Father Edmund Walsh, the vice-president of Georgetown University, who served as messenger between Ruiz y Flores and Morrow. In a conversation on June 10 Morrow advised Walsh that it was futile for churchmen to insist upon a religious settlement including specific Church demands. The next day Walsh informed the ambassador that the apostolic delegate and the bishop of Tabasco were willing to consider an agreement along the lines of the Calles/Burke exchange of 1928, "a gradual approach on a broad base rather than a demand for detailed and immediate governmental concessions." Morrow conveyed this information to Portes Gil, who set June 12 as the date for his first meeting with the prelates. Before this meeting occurred, Calles, who had been vacationing in northern Mexico, returned to the capital and remained there throughout the negotiations.²

At the June 12 conference, which was held in secret, Portes Gil advised the bishops that he would not alter Mexico's religious laws as a prerequisite for the clergy's

² Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," pp. 501-502; José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate: Gran defensor de la iglesia, (México: Editorial "Rex Mex," 1952), 1:278; New York Times, 12 June 1929, p. 4.

return to the churches. He offered to provide the Church with the same assurances as those presented in the Calles/Burke exchange of 1928, "no more and no less." After lengthy discussion the bishops and the president agreed to draft "tentative statement[s] of position" for consideration at their next meeting. The two documents would be reconciled, if possible, and then referred to the Holy See for approval. Accordingly, the next day Portes Gil presented a formal exposition of the government's position. Complaining that the president's words were "unnecessarily brusque," the apostolic delegate and his associate failed to submit a written statement at this second meeting, and little was accomplished.³

The Mexican press speculated wildly about the proceedings of these two conferences and the possible terms of a religious accord. These conjectures created unrest among many Mexicans, whether they were anticlerical revolutionaries who feared that the Church might regain some of its lost power or militant Catholics who opposed an unsatisfactory compromise with the State. Anxious to assure his constituents that he was complying with presidential responsibilities, Portes Gil stated that priests could resume public worship only when they agreed to subject themselves to the constitution and the law. The apostolic

³Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," p. 502.

delegate also tried to calm the people by advising them to disregard any statement, in the press or elsewhere, that did not carry the signature of himself or Portes ⁴ Gil.

Fearing that negative public opinion might endanger chances for a settlement, Morrow took matters into his own hands. He decided to compose a moderate, carefully worded exposition of the government's position that would be acceptable to both the president and the apostolic delegate. The ambassador knew that three specific matters were of great concern to the Church. First, the Mexican episcopate strongly objected to the requirement that the priest in charge of each church register with the civil authorities; for, this requirement enabled the government to entrust Catholic churches to schismatic priests, as Calles had done in 1925. Secondly, Church officials feared the effect of secular education on Catholicism in Mexico. They knew that the Church to perpetuate itself must impart its doctrines to the people; yet, the constitution forbade religious instruction in the Mexican schools. Finally, the hierarchy realized the need for an effective legal means of redressing its grievances, because Mexican congressmen

⁴ Eduardo Iglesias and Rafael Martínez del Campo [Aguiles P. Moctezuma], El conflicto religioso de 1926: Sus orígenes, Su desarrollo. Su solución. (México: Editorial Jus, 1960), 2d ed., 2 vols.; New York Times, 15 June 1929, p. 15; El Universal, 15 June 1929.

since 1926 had repeatedly rejected petitions submitted by the Catholic clergy and laity. Taking these matters into consideration, Morrow on June 15 formulated a statement which declared that neither the constitution nor laws of Mexico intended to destroy the identity of the Roman Catholic Church, that the government would not register clergymen who had not been designated by their hierachial superiors, that ministers could impart their religious doctrines within the churches, and that all citizens could petition at any time for legal reforms. The ambassador was offering basic assurances to the Church while not relinquishing the State's demand of clerical obedience to the law.⁵

Before taking this draft to the president, the ambassador consulted Calles, who was still a prominent figure on the Mexican political scene. After receiving the Sonoran's approval, Morrow took the proposed presidential declaration to Portes Gil, who agreed to study it. While the executive was deliberating, Morrow provided a copy of the statement

⁵Pascual Díaz, "The Policy of the Government is Anti-Religious," in Charles C. Cumberland, ed., The Meaning of the Mexican Revolution (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1967), p. 27; New York Times, 22 June 1929, p. 1; Frank Brandenburg, The Making of Modern Mexico (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 177; Jesús García Gutierrez [Félix Navarrete], De Cabarrús a Carranza: La legislación anticatólica en México (México: Editorial Jus, 1957), p. 111; Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," pp. 502-504.

to Archbishop Ruiz y Flores. The apostolic delegate reacted favorably to the document and forwarded it to Rome. Portes Gil, after making several minor changes in Morrow's text, agreed to adopt it as his own.⁶ If Pius XI also accepted the government's statement of position as formulated by Morrow, the three year suspension of clerical services in Mexico would end.

In June of 1929 Pius XI had to decide whether to approve of a settlement that was far from satisfactory from the Church's point of view or continue indefinitely the suspension of public worship in Mexico. Neither alternative was appealing. Upon announcing the clerical withdrawl in 1926, the Mexican episcopate had emphatically declared that the priests would not return to the churches until the government suspended or reformed objectionable legislation. The Holy See had seconded these declarations. But, the Mexican Congress had consistently refused to enact requested legal reforms, and Portes Gil had demanded clerical obedience to the law as an indispensable condition for the return of the clergy to the churches. Therefore, acceptance of the religious accord under consideration would mean not only that churchmen were failing to honor their pledge, but also that the

⁶ Ellis, "Dwight Morrow," pp. 502-503.

Church had been subordinated to the authority of the State in Mexico.

As mentioned, settlement on the government's terms was not a pleasing prospect, but neither was the prolongation of the clerical strike; for, it denied the comfort of the sacraments to the faithful and encouraged many Mexicans to ignore their religious obligations. Pius XI was also aware that the suspension of public worship had spawned adverse spiritual effects in Mexico, and he realized that devout Mexicans were sacrificing their lives in an apparently ineffectual fight against the State. A realistic appraisal of the Mexican situation convinced the pope of the imperative need to return institutionalized Catholicism to Mexico and end the religious strife in that country. Viewing the proposed settlement as the lesser of two evils, Pius XI decided with qualifications to accept it.⁷

In a cable to Archbishop Ruiz y Flores on June 20, the pope expressed his earnest desire for a peaceful resolution of the Mexican religious conflict. He

⁷ Alberto María Carreño, ed., Pastorales, edictos y otros documentos del excmo. y rvmo. sr. dr. d. Pascual Díaz, arzobispo de México (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1938), pp. iv, v; Alberto María Carreño, El arzobispo de México: Excmo. sr. dr. don Pascual Díaz y el conflicto religioso, 2d ed. rev. (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1943), p. 620.

authorized the apostolic delegate to accept the Church-State settlement in question if Portes Gil would agree to the following conditions: (1) the granting of full amnesty to Catholic rebels, (2) the restoration of church buildings and annexes, and (3) unrestricted relations between Rome and the Mexican Church. Morrow was upset by the contents of this cable, because the proposed religious agreement had not included amnesty for the Cristeros and their clerical accomplices nor mentioned the restoration of the churches to the clergy. However, the apostolic delegate assured the ambassador that the pope's instructions could be interpreted so as to provide no real difficulties. Morrow remained confused, but pleased, by Ruiz y Flores' assurances.⁸

In a conference on June 21 the apostolic delegate informed the president of the pope's three conditions for a settlement. Willing to offer reasonable concessions to the Church, Portes Gil summoned Secretary of Gobernación Felipe Canales and instructed him to order amnesty for all Cristeros who wanted to surrender. Additionally, the president verbally promised Ruiz y Flores and Díaz y Barreto that church buildings not currently in use for

⁸David C. Bailey, ¡Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1974), p. 278-279; Ruiz y Flores, Recuerdo de recuerdos, pp. 95-96.

other purposes would be restored to the clergy. Having offered this evidence of his good faith, Portes Gil broached a delicate subject. He asked that Bishops José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate and José María González Valencia remain in exile indefinitely and also requested that Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez leave Mexico for an unspecified period of time. The president explained his belief that the absence of these prelates would facilitate the speedy pacification of Mexico, "since the part that these men had taken in the uprising [of the Cristeros] was well known." When Ruiz y Flores refused to guarantee the exile of the three men as a condition for peace, Portes Gil indicated that he was only making a request, not issuing a demand. The archbishop finally agreed to ask the three bishops in question to accept a voluntary exile. Having resolved preliminary differences, the negotiators were ready to conclude the religious accord. Because there were no official diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Vatican, there was no formal document ending the Church-State conflict. Instead, the president and the apostolic delegate issued separate, but simultaneous, statements indicating their respective positions and announcing the resumption of public worship.⁹

⁹ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 282; Ruiz y Flores, Recuerdo de recuerdos, pp. 96-97; Emeterio Valverde Téllez, Bio-bibliografía eclesiástica mexicana 1821-1943, 3 vols.,

The statement released to the newspapers by Portes Gil differed only slightly from that authored by Dwight Morrow on June 15. The president referred to the Catholic episcopate's fear that the laws of Mexico threatened the spiritual identity of the Church. He explained that Archbishop Ruiz y Flores and Bishop Díaz in recent conversations had informed him that the clergy would resume public worship if the Church could enjoy freedom within the law to exercise its spiritual functions. Accordingly, Portes Gil explained that he was taking advantage of this opportunity to declare that neither the constitution nor the laws of Mexico intended to destroy the identity of the Roman Catholic Church. After pledging to enforce religious laws "with tolerance and without bias," the president offered three assurances to the Church. First, the registration requirement for clergymen did not mean that the government would register priests who had not been designated by their hierachial superiors. Secondly, although religious instruction was prohibited in the schools, ministers could teach their doctrines within

(México: Editorial Jus, 1949), 1:246; Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, p. 73; New York Times, 22 June 1929, p. 2. In accord with the president's wishes, Francisco Orozco y Jiménez left Mexico, and José María González Valencia and José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate remained in exile. (Alberto María Carreño, Páginas de historia mexicana: (Pages of Mexican History), Colección de obras diversas, vol. 3 (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1936), p. 101).

church confines. And, thirdly, because the Constitution of 1917 guaranteed to every citizen the right of petition, practitioners of any faith could appeal to Congress for the reform of offensive laws.¹⁰

On July 21 Ruiz y Flores happily informed newsmen that a "spirit of mutual good will and respect" had existed in his and Bishop Díaz' recent conversations with the president. As a result of these discussions, the archbishop explained, Portes Gil had released an important pronouncement and the Catholic clergy would resume religious services in Mexico in accord with the law. Concluding his statement, the apostolic delegate expressed the hope that the resumption of public worship would lead the Mexican people "to cooperate in all the moral efforts that are being made for the benefit of all those of the land of our elders."¹¹ Later that same day Ruiz y Flores issued a second press statement in which he expressed his deep gratitude to everyone who had helped to reach an accord between Church and State.¹²

The June 21 accord had its positive features from the

¹⁰ Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 279; El Universal, 22 June 1929; Emilio Portes Gil, Quince años de política mexicana, 3d ed. (México: Ediciones Librería Botas, 1954), pp. 327-329.

¹¹ El Universal, 22 June 1929.

¹² New York Times, 22 June 1929, p. 2.

Church's point of view. First and foremost, it authorized the resumption of public worship, a matter of top priority to churchmen in Rome and Mexico. And, the settlement paved the way for the termination of the "bloody" and "sterile" civil war that had cost the lives of hundreds of Catholics. It also provided safeguards against the threat of a schismatic movement, assured that religious education could be offered in the churches, if not elsewhere, and provided Catholics with a legal means by which to seek changes in the law. Additionally, Church officials believed that Portes Gil, by negotiating with Ruiz y Flores and participating in a papally approved settlement, gave de facto recognition to the Church as a corporate entity. On the negative side, the religious agreement required the clergy to obey the same laws that they had vowed to resist at an earlier date and to tolerate, if not acknowledge, the superiority of the State. Furthermore, the settlement did not actually resolve the basic areas of disagreement between Church and State. In fact, it ignored them. It was a practical pact, a workable arrangement, to restore formal Catholicism to the Mexican people and end the conflict between Church and State in Mexico.¹³

¹³Abbe Alphonse Lugan, "Church and State in Mexico," Current History 33(1931):674 (hereafter cited as CH); Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, pp. 240-241; Jesús García Gutiérrez, Acción anticatólica en México, 3d ed.

With the conclusion of the religious settlement, the Mexican government ordered immigration authorities to allow exiled clerics to reenter the country and provided for the release of Catholic prisoners charged with violations of Mexico's religious laws. Then, on June 25 Secretary of Gobernación Canales met with Ruiz y Flores and Díaz y Barreto, who had just been appointed archbishop of Mexico. At this meeting Canales outlined the procedures by which Catholic churches, which had been in the custody of civic committees since 1926, would be returned to the clergy. Public worship was resumed rather quickly in the Federal District, but the return of the priests to the churches throughout Mexico proved to be a slow, difficult, and at times impossible undertaking. At the state level, especially in Tabasco and Veracruz, anticlerical and anti-Catholic revolutionaries refused to cooperate with the national government in restoring institutionalized Catholicism to Mexico. Despite the Church-State accord, the Catholic clergy in these states were unable to minister freely to the people, and the faithful were denied

(México: Editorial Jus, 1959), p. 181; John Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America: A History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 402-403; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexican Church and State End Three-Year Conflict," CH 30(1929):918; "Week By Week," Commonweal, 3 July 1929, p. 244; "Armistice in Mexico," Commonweal, 10 July 1929, p. 263; New York Times, 23 June 1929, p. 22.

the right to practice publicly their religion. The federal government not only failed to rectify this situation but also as time passed had its own difficulties with the Church.¹⁴

Ironically, attacks by her external enemies were not the only problems plaguing the Church in Mexico after June 21, 1929. She was also torn by internal dissension. The terms of the religious settlement and the secretive manner in which it was negotiated alienated not only militant laymen but also several Catholic clerics. Because the anti-arreglistas were outspoken in their criticism of the Church-State pact, Apostolic Delegate Ruiz y Flores and Archbishop Díaz were placed on the defensive. This division within Catholic ranks between the opponents and the proponents of the religious accord occupied much of the Mexican Church's time and energies from 1929 to

¹⁴ El Universal, 22 June 1929; 23 June 1929; 26 June 1929; New York Times, 23 June 1929, p. 22; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 292; Lugan, "Church and State," p. 672; El "modus vivendi," la verdad sobre los arreglos de la cuestión religiosa, celebrados entre el Lic. E. Portes Gil, y los ilustrísimos sres. Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores y Pascual Díaz (México, November, 1929), fondo XV, "Conflictos religiosos, 1910-1929," carpeta 1, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Departamento Cultural de Conducumex, S.A., México, D.F. (hereafter cited as CEHM). The complex, interconnected relations between the Church, the federal government, and selected state governments after June 21, 1929, will be the topic of Chapter VII of this study.

1931.¹⁵

Most of Mexico's citizenry learned of the religious accord and its terms by means of the president's and the apostolic delegate's statements, which appeared in the newspapers on June 22. Reaction was mixed. On June 22 the LNDLR announced its unconditional acceptance of the Portes Gil/Ruiz y Flores pact and declared its allegiance to the apostolic delegate. In private, however, Leaguers and other militant Catholics damned the settlement for jeopardizing the Cristero movement and offering only the vague hope that "little by little" legal reforms might be achieved in the future. LNDLR officials and National Guard officers were especially bitter because they had not been consulted during the course of the negotiations and because the agreement, as presented in the newspapers, did not guarantee amnesty for Catholics. Significantly, Catholic activists were not the only Mexicans to find fault with the Church-State settlement. Staunch anti-clericals disapproved of Portes Gil's decision to allow the clergy to resume public worship in Mexico. Typical of this

¹⁵James W. Wilkie, "The Meaning of the Cristero Religious War," in James W. Wilkie and Albert L. Michaels, eds., Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval, 1910-1940, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 164; Carreño, Pastorales, p. 4; Mecham, Church and State, p. 403; Alberto María Carreño, El exmo. y rmo. sr. sr. d. Pascual Díaz y Barreto: Arzobispo de México (homenajes póstumos) (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1936), pp. 23-24. Anti-arreglistas were the Mexican Catholics who opposed the religious accord of June 21, 1929.

group was the Callista, Adalberto Tejeda, ex-secretary of gobernación and present governor of Veracruz. Viewing the religious accord as a victory for reactionary forces in Mexico, Tejeda insisted that the clergy were and always would be enemies of the Republic. Although extremists on both sides criticized the settlement, thousands of Mexicans flocked to the churches, especially the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe, to give thanks for the end of the clerical suspension. Grateful that the religious crisis was resolved, the more moderate sector of the population proposed to hold a public demonstration of appreciation to Portes Gil on July 6. However, the president refused to authorize the demonstration, which he feared would antagonize dissident elements within the country.¹⁶

The apostolic delegate reacted promptly to criticism within Catholic ranks of the settlement and his part in arranging it. In a June 25 letter to the episcopate, clergy, and laity of Mexico, Ruiz y Flores explained that

¹⁶Manifesto, Directive Committee of the LNDLR to the nation, 12 July 1929, CEHM, fondo XV, carpet 1; Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, pp. 63, 66; Moctezuma, Conflicto religioso, 2:518; Alicia Olivera Sedano, Aspectos del conflicto religioso de 1926 a 1929: Sus antecedentes y consecuencias (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1966), p. 266; Enrique de Jesús Ochoa [Spectator], Los Cristeros del Volcán de Colima: Escenas de la lucha por la libertad religiosa en México, 2d ed., 2 vols. (México: Editorial Jus, 1961), 2:214; Lugan, "Church and State," pp. 672-673; New York Times, 23 June 1929, p. 22; 24 June 1929, p. 1; El Universal, 22 June 1929; 23 June 1929; 24 June 1929.

he and Bishop Díaz had hoped for the recovery of the Church's rights in Mexico, but that this position had proved untenable. Therefore, they had sought the best possible way to remedy the "evils" caused by the suspension and allow the faithful to practice their religion again. Finally, he and Díaz for lack of a better alternative had settled for a de facto recognition of the Church. The archbishop hastened to remind his critics that Pius XI had not only authorized the negotiations with Portes Gil but also had approved of the resultant settlement. Having stressed the legitimacy of the June 21 agreement, Ruiz y Flores declared that the Church had not surrendered in its fight for its rights. Citing the advisability of Catholic Action as promoted by the Holy See, he urged Mexican Catholics to utilize their guaranteed right of petition to seek legal reforms which would more satisfactorily resolve the position of the Church in Mexico. However, the apostolic delegate warned his co-religionists not to be impatient, because "the evils of a century can not be cured in a day."¹⁷

As this pastoral indicated, Church officials in Rome and Mexico regarded the June 21 accord and its consequences as a temporary rather than a definitive solution to the Mexican religious conflict. It was an armistice, a modus

¹⁷ Apostolic delegate to the Mexican episcopate, clergy, and people, 25 June 1929 in El Universal, 26 June 1929.

vivendi, allowing the clergy to return to the churches, impart their doctrines, and minister to the people. With the resumption of public worship the Church, as an eternal institution, could afford the virtue of patience. Although subordinated to civil authority for the time being, Mexican clergymen could hope that someday anticlericalism in Mexico would wane and the Church would regain its lost power. In the meantime Mexican Catholics were expected to accept the settlement without question and to console themselves with the thought that "the life of the Church is that of its Founder . . . [in but] a little while . . . she will rise again filled with vitality and youth. . . ."¹⁸

The Cristeros were in no position to be patient and accept the leisurely pace of history. After June 21 federal airplanes flew over areas of rebel activity in Jalisco, Colima, Michoacán, Zacatecas, and Guanajuato and dropped pamphlets telling of the agreement between Church and State. The Cristeros were offered safe conduct if they surrendered, but warned that they would be relentlessly pursued if they did not abandon the fight. Although hostilities were suspended almost immediately in most parts

¹⁸ Melisina Mary Blount [Mrs. George Norman], God's Jester: The Story of the Life and Martyrdom of Father Michael Pro, S.J. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1939), p. 123; New York Times, 22 June 1929, p. 2; 23 June 1929, p. 22; 24 June 1929, p. 14; García Gutiérrez, Acción anticatólica, p. 183.

of the country, the war was not over. Because the actual settlement of June 21 did not contain a specific amnesty provision and because militant Catholics desired a definitive military solution to the religious conflict, many rebels were reluctant to end their crusade. This placed the Church, which was now at peace with the State, in an awkward position. Consequently, a substantial number of clergymen determined to remove their moral and active support from the armed resistance movement and counseled their parishioners to do likewise. The loss of clerical and popular support created a "grave situation" for the Cristeros, who were largely dependent upon public assistance. Various officers of the National Guard soon informed Military Chief Jesús Degollado Guízar that the resolution of the religious crisis had ended the legitimacy of their movement. If they continued to oppose the government under existing circumstances, the officers warned, they would be bandits rather than soldiers of Christ.¹⁹

Degollado Guízar went in secrecy to Mexico City to confer with the directors of the LNDR as to a plan

¹⁹ El Universal, 23 June 1929; 27 June 1929; New York Times, 24 June 1929, p. 14; 25 June 1929, p. 4; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, trans. Aurelio Garzón del Camino, 2d ed. (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1974), vol. 1, La guerra de los Cristeros, pp. 323-324; Jesús Degollado Guízar, Memorias de Jesús Degollado Guízar: Ultimo general del ejército cristero (México: Editorial Jus, 1957), pp. 234, 237.

of action. The general informed the Directive Committee that the inevitable result of continued rebellion would be "anarchy and scandal." The League officials, despite their obvious dislike for the Church-State accord, agreed with Degollado Guízar that the Cristero movement must end, but only after the government provided immunity for the rebels. The military chief compiled a list of fourteen conditions for Portes Gil to meet before the National Guard would disband. Luis Beltrán, LNDLR official, took the list to the president who agreed to grant the concessions which included amnesty for the rebels and civilians who had aided them, compensation to the Cristeros for each rifle turned over to the government, release of all religious prisoners, and repatriation of all religious exiles. With the end of the rebellion a certainty, the officials of the League on July 12 publicly acknowledged their support of the Cristero movement, but denied that either the Holy See or the Mexican episcopate had been involved in it. After calling the June 21 agreement an armistice leaving key matters unresolved, the Directive Committee announced its decision to end "la lucha bélica" and return to "las actividades normales."²⁰

²⁰ Degollado Guízar, Memorias, pp. 236-237, 268-270; Manifesto, Directive Committee of LNDLR to the nation, 12 July 1929, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 1.

Although most of the religious rebels in the field laid down their arms by the end of July, Degollado did not officially dissolve the National Guard until August. At the formal disbandment ceremony attended by his chiefs of operation, the military chief declared that the army was being dissolved not because it was "conquered by its enemies, but. . . [because it was] abandoned by those [the clergy] who should receive. . . the valiant fruit of its sacrifices and abnegations."²¹ Degollado's words expressed the bitterness of the undefeated Catholic crusaders who reluctantly deserted the battlefield because of the Church-State accord.

For many of the Cristeros who laid down their arms and went home in the summer of 1929, peace was illusory. In the months following the end of the war, a seemingly systematic attempt to assassinate men known to have participated in or aided the armed resistance movement occurred. Although actual responsibility for the assassinations was never determined, they were probably meant as a reprisal against the former religious rebels or as a deterrent to the possibility of another rebellion. Whatever the cause, bitter Catholics complained that as many Cristeros lost their lives after the settlement as had died during the two

²¹ Degollado Guizar, Memorias, pp. 270-273; Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:323.

and a half year civil war. While this estimate of post-war casualties was undoubtedly exaggerated, ex-rebels in Jalisco, Zacatecas, Colima, and elsewhere often had to flee to the mountains for safety or seek security in the Mexican capital. Whenever possible, the LNDLR attempted to aid these refugees and to assist the widows and orphans of assassinated Cristeros.²²

With the League's decision in the summer of 1929 to end the "lucha bélica" and return to normal activities came the need to determine policy for the future. Ruiz y Flores felt that the organization, to offset its close association with the now defunct Cristero movement, should effect major changes. He recommended that the LNDLR adopt a new name and a different set of officers. A general convention of the League's membership met in early August to consider Ruiz y Flores' suggestions. The participants not only refused to change the name of their organization but also gave the directors a vote of confidence. Then, the members composed and approved the following set of resolutions:

²² Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:344-345; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, p. 294; Olivera Sedano, Conflictio religioso, p. 238; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, vol. 3, Los Cristeros, p. 265; General Ag. T. Sánchez of the National Guard to Apostolic Delegate Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, 11 February 1930, reel 30, Archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as LA followed by microfilm reel number); miscellaneous document, LA:30; Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores to Agustín Sánchez, 18 February 1930, LA:30.

first, the League was returning to action in the "terreno cívico"; second, the organization would work outside all political partyism; third, while conserving its autonomy, the LNDLR would submit to the moral direction and counsel of the episcopate; and, fourth, the League advocated the holding of a national referendum to reveal to the government "the will of the Mexican people in order to reconquer and to maintain . . . [their] liberties." Although pleased by the results of this assembly, the officials of the LNDLR realized the foolhardiness of ignoring completely the wishes of the apostolic delegate. Therefore, the Directive Committee decided to take the nominal step of altering the name of the association to omit the word religion. However, the bulletin that announced the change from the name Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa to Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad (LNDL) assured that the organization itself would be the same as always.²³

Although the LNDL assembly in August, 1929, resolved to submit to the guidance of the episcopate, some Leaguers were among the discontented Catholics who attacked the

²³Francis Patrick Dooley, "The Cristeros, Calles and Mexican Catholicism (Ph. D. diss., University of Maryland, 1972), p. 25⁴; Bailey, Church-State Conflict, pp. 289-290; "VITA" bulletin no. 9, 25 February 1930, LA:30; LNDL bulletin no. 11, 15 January 1930, CEHM, fondo XV, "Conflict religioso, 1930-1937," carpeta 2. Hereafter in the text the League will be referred to as the LNDL instead of the LNDLR.

religious settlement. They not only attended meetings at which the June 21 pact was brutally dissected and its weaknesses laid bare but also distributed propaganda, such as the pamphlet, Los "arreglos" religiosos y la pastoral del . . . Ruiz y Flores. This pamphlet, authored under the pseudonym of Arquemedes, charged that individual prelates were not infallible and refuted the apostolic delegate's pastoral of June 25, 1929. Labeling the Church-State agreement false and undecorous, Arquemedes asked Catholics to awake and organize if they wished to defend themselves and their rights. Whether or not they were members of the League, Catholics who shared Arquemedes' views refused to heed Ruiz y Flores' dictates that they passively accept the religious settlement.²⁴

Dissatisfaction with the Portes Gil/Ruiz y Flores agreement was not restricted to the laity. A few members of the lower clergy, especially those who had close ties to the Cristeros, criticized the religious accord. Among the priests who took pen in hand to challenge the

²⁴ Olivera Sedano, Conflictos religiosos, pp. 238-239; Pedro Hernández and Rafael Ceniceros y Villareal to Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra [Juan Manuel], 3 October 1930, LA:31; [Arquimedes], Los "arreglos" religiosos y la pastoral del ilmo. Delegado Apostólico Monseñor Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores: Examinadas a la luz de la doctrina católica (México, July, 1929), CEHM, fondo XV, carpet 1. The defenders of the settlement also distributed propaganda, such as El "modus vivendi," la verdad sobre los arreglos.

settlement were J. Leopoldo Gálvez, author of Gran ofertorio de opiniones y esperanzas para un sacrificio, and Amado López, author of a series of inflammatory articles which appeared in El Hombre Libre in 1930-1931. On various occasions López' superior, Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, instructed him to cease his writings. In a letter to the archbishop in June, 1931, López insisted that he had never intended to rebel against ecclesiastical authority or to deprecate the apostolic delegate. However, the priest commented that he had never seen the document by which the pope had signified his approval of the religious settlement and charged that this settlement was responsible for the existing divisions among Mexican clerics and laymen. After expressing these thoughts and accepting full responsibility for his past actions, López agreed to try with God's help to obey the archbishop's order to maintain silence on the subject of the religious accord.²⁵

Some prelates also disapproved of the Church-State agreement, but with one notable exception they kept their feelings to themselves. Bishop José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate, a staunch supporter of the Catholic resistance

²⁵ Nonconformist priests and Catholics, "respetuosa interpellación al exmo. sr. delegado apostólico dr. d. Leopoldo Ruiz y Fores," CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 1; Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:338-339; Amado López to Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, 10 June 1931, LA:32.

movement, was embittered because he believed that the settlement had not gained anything favorable for the Church. The dissident bishop went to Rome where he had an audience with Pius XI on October 24, 1929, and met with Secretary Pietro Gasparri on October 25 and 27. During these interviews, the Mexican churchman presented his version of the religious situation in his country. Then, shortly after leaving Rome he delivered a discourse in Louvain, Belgium on December 12. Discussing the fight that had been waged in Mexico between the noble soldiers of Christ and the partisans of the devil, Manríquez y Zárate explained that the rebels had laid down their arms out of obedience to the Church. He charged that the Church's enemies had been shrewd enough to make a thousand promises to Rome and to compliant Mexican prelates in order to break the rebellion. The bishop noted that the government had accomplished its purpose without actually changing one comma of Mexico's religious laws. On this and numerous other occasions, especially in his private correspondence, Manríquez y Zárate evidenced contempt for the religious settlement and resentment toward the men who had negotiated it.²⁶

²⁶ Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, p. 14; Miscellaneous document, 20 October 1930, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2; Discurso del ilmo. y rvmo. J. de J. Manríquez y Zárate (México, February, 1930), LA:30; José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate to José Manterola, 11 January 1930, LA:

On January 26, 1930, some two thousand League members met to make a "recuento de fuerzas." Early in the meeting a copy of Manríquez y Zárate's Louvain discourse was read to the audience, which responded with "delirio." Then the Directive Committee in a formal statement explained that the purpose of the assembly was to determine how many Leaguers wished to disband the organization and how many wanted to continue in the quest for liberty. The directors asked those members who wanted to work untiringly for victory to promise to persevere until their liberties were recovered and the fundamental institutions of Mexico were guaranteed. Not surprisingly, the Leaguers present at the meeting revealed their determination to continue their activities until their goals were achieved. Pascual Díaz, who maintained a close surveillance upon the LNDL, wrote President Rafael Ceniceros y Villareal to ask for a detailed report on the resolutions taken by this January assembly. The archbishop explained that he needed this information because the activities of the League could reflect upon the Church and be of great importance to its peace and tranquility.²⁷

39; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:330-331; "El excmo. sr. dr. Manríquez y Zárate: Padre del Juandiegismo," El Eco Guadalupana, 12 February 1973, pp. 31, 41.

²⁷Memorandum, J. M. [Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra] to D. Chucho and VITA, January, 1930, LA:31; Discourse, Directive Committee of LNDL, 26 January 1930, LA:30; Pascual Díaz,

Ruiz y Flores, who was also concerned with the League's activities, wrote to Ceniceros y Villareal in February to register complaints against the lay organization. The apostolic delegate noted that in the assembly which met on January 26 scandalous discourses, including that of Manríquez y Zárate, had been read. Complaining that agents of the League had been circulating copies of these same speeches, he begged the members of the LNDL not to publish or distribute propaganda about the religious conflict and its solution. Although he assured that the episcopate bore no ill will toward the League, Ruiz y Flores warned that the organization would encounter opposition if it resisted the religious settlement or sponsored gatherings of a seditious nature.²⁸

Also in February of 1930 Ruiz y Flores issued a pastoral in which he cited by name two anti-accord publications, Los arreglos religiosos by Arquemedes and Gran ofertorio de opiniones by J. Leopoldo Gálvez. Reminding that the pope was the competent judge of the legitimacy of the religious settlement, the archbishop insisted that no one else had the right to judge the actions of the Holy See. However, so that no one could say that he exacted

archbishop of Mexico, to Rafael Ceniceros y Villareal, president of the LNDL, 29 January 1930, LA:30.

²⁸ Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores to Rafael Ceniceros Villareal, 18 February 1930, LA:30.

blind obedience from Mexican Catholics, Ruiz y Flores replied to some of the slanders presented in these writings. He explained that the Church had resumed public worship in Mexico for the good of the people and for the establishing of amicable relations with the Mexican government. Referring to the argument presented by anti-arreglistas that the Church in 1929 had accepted laws which it had earlier called unacceptable, he declared that it was one thing to tolerate laws and something quite different to accept and approve of those same laws. He stressed that the Church was only tolerating the religious laws in Mexico and added that Church officials would take appropriate action when they decided that the time was right to petition for legal reforms. The apostolic delegate warned that Catholics should not listen to slander against the prelates, attend meetings where the religious agreement was questioned, or participate in seditious gatherings. After admonishing that the faithful should try to "unify their criterion with that of the episcopate," Ruiz y Flores reminded dissident Catholics that they could appeal to the Holy See, but not for the purpose of sowing needless discord.²⁹

²⁹ Unidentified newspaper clipping, "Enérgica actitud del sr. delegado apostólico," CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2; Unidentified newspaper clipping, "Comenta Mons. Ruiz dos opúsculos en relación con importante asunto," LA:30.

Feeling that this pastoral was directed against their organization, the Directive Committee of the LNDL protested. Responding in early March, the apostolic delegate claimed that his words had not been intended to reproach the League, which had properly limited itself to Catholic Action. Rather, he had meant to chastise Catholics who gathered to censure the religious accord and advocate non-passive means of resolving the religious problem in Mexico. Acknowledging that some Leaguers might have taken part in these gatherings, the archbishop said that he did not believe that the organization itself was responsible. However, he noted that the LNDL did have the responsibility of disciplining its membership.³⁰

In view of the activities of some Leaguers and the public declarations of the apostolic delegate, many Mexican Catholics were uncertain as to the legitimacy of the organization. This situation worsened when certain members of the lower clergy saw fit to advise their parishioners against belonging to or offering assistance to the LNDL. President Ceniceros y Villareal wrote to Ruiz y Flores to protest against clerical attacks upon the League. Expressing his credulity that some priests would seek to weaken the very organization that was created to fight for the Church, he begged the apostolic delegate to take suitable

³⁰ Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores to Miguel González, 6 March 1930, LA:30.

action so that "the development of our action not be weakened."³¹

Bishop Miguel de la Mora y Mora of San Luis Potosí realized that the faithful were confused in their attitudes about the LNDL. To advise his parishioners on this matter he issued a pastoral on February 4, 1930. He explained that there were distinct types of activities to which an organization could dedicate itself. Action to better the institutions through which society is governed was political action, while action to let people know their duties as citizens was civic action. Works of charity and piety and spreading of the faith constituted religious action. And, de la Mora continued, action to diffuse and defend Christian principles and arrive at the reign of Christ on earth was Catholic Action. The bishop commented that the Church and the episcopate neither organized nor directed political or civic action, but they did organize and direct religious and Catholic Action. He stated that the LNDL, as an agent of civic action, was totally independent of the Church, episcopate, and clergy. As long as the League worked within the norms prescribed by Catholic dogma, it was not illicit or prohibited. Adding that Catholic social

³¹ María Ramírez to the archbishop of Mexico, 26 March 1930, LA:30; President of the LNDL to Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, 11 March 1930, LA:30.

dogma taught the faithful to exercise their rights and comply with their duties, del Mora assured laymen that they could belong to the LNDL if they so desired.³²

Hoping to clarify the League's position once and for all, the Directive Committee in March issued a circular letter asking each member of the Mexican episcopate to subscribe to Miguel de la Mora's declaration of February 4. The prelates were told that their endorsement of this pastoral would place the LNDL on a firmer footing and give its activities a major "impulso."³³ The bishop of Colima replied that he was ill and needed time to learn more about the League before making a final decision. Noting that conditions in his diocesis were distinct from those in San Luis Potosí, the bishop of Tehuantepec refrained from subscribing to the pastoral. Nevertheless, he offered his blessing to "all . . . [who] comply with their duties. . . under the direction of the true morality and in conformity with the indefectible norms of the Holy See."³⁴

³² "Declaraciones del ilmo. sr. obispo de San Luis Potosí, respeto de la Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad," 4 February 1930, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2; Unidentified newspaper clipping, "El señor obispo de San Luis ha hecho declaraciones," 4 February 1930, LA:30.

³³ Form letter, Pedro Hernández and José Tello of the LNDL to each member of the Mexican episcopate, 22 March 1930, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2. A copy of this letter may also be found in LA:30.

³⁴ Jenaro Méndez del Río, bishop of Tehuantepec, to LNDL, 3 April 1930, LA:30; Bishop of Colima to LNDL, 26 March 1930, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2.

Some of the other prelates likewise expressed reluctance to adopt de la Mora's declarations as their own. However, at least sixteen members of the hierarchy answered in the vein of the archbishop of Puebla, who wrote that he was "de todo conforme," and the bishop of Aguascalientes, who applauded the February 4 pastoral. As for de la Mora, in a letter of March 27 he expressed his gratitude that his humble words might do some good and prayed to God that all Mexicans would realize the gravity of the present situation in their country.³⁵

The generally affirmative tone of the prelates' replies to the LNDL's circular letter helped to allay confusion among the faithful as to the legitimacy of the organization, but the Catholic community continued to be plagued by dissension. Disregarding the instructions of the apostolic delegate, anti-arreglistas persisted in attacking the June 21, 1929, accord. So, Ruiz y Flores issued yet another state in September of 1930. Declaring

³⁵ Pedro Vera y Zuria, archbishop of Puebla, to LNDL, 31 March 1930, and José de Jesús López, bishop of Aguascalientes, to LNDL, 27 March 1930, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2; Bishop of San Luis Potosí to LNDL, 27 March 1930, LA:30. Copies of all of the prelates' replies to the LNDL may be found in reel 30 of the Archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty and in fondo XV, carpeta 2 of the Centro de Estudios de Historia de México. In December of 1930 Pascual Díaz, who had been appointed pontifical director of Mexican Catholic Action by Pope Pius XI, also subscribed to Miguel de la Mora's letter of February 4 (Carreño, Pascual Díaz y Barreto, p. 120; Pascual Díaz to Directive Committee of the League, 11 December 1930, LA:30).

that the pope had resolved the Mexican religious conflict, he reiterated that it was not licit for any Catholic to constitute himself as the judge of the supreme authority of the Church. Dissident Catholics resented this and the archbishop's other attempts to impose silence upon them and force them to accept the religious settlement. The feelings of this group were expressed by José González, a layman who in September addressed letters to the apostolic delegate and the archbishop of Mexico. González asked the two churchmen if it was a sin for him to say that the anti-religious laws in Mexico remained unreformed or to say that the prelates by accepting the settlement had originated the division among Catholics or to say that Ruiz y Flores was trying to shift responsibility from himself to the papacy. The layman noted that the papal document approving of the accord had never been made public. He declared that it was one thing for Pius XI to authorize his representatives to negotiate a settlement and another thing for him to approve of the terms of a specific agreement. González expressed his doubts that the pope had approved of the Portes Gil/Ruiz y Flores pact. Like González, many other Catholics rightly or wrongly placed responsibility for the imperfect religious settlement on the apostolic delegate and the archbishop of Mexico rather

than the Holy See.³⁶

In September, 1930, Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, vice-president of the League, was enroute to Rome to express the organization's disapproval of the June 21 settlement and to protest the actions of the two prelates who had negotiated it. He carried a letter identifying himself as a member of the Directive Committee and conferring upon him the necessary authority to represent the LNDL during his European trip. While in the holy city Palomar y Vizcarra worked to convince Church officials that the situation of the Church in Mexico was not serene, as the defenders of the settlement claimed, but dismal. He presented documents to substantiate his charges that the religious accord of 1929 was a mistake and a failure.³⁷

³⁶ Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 30(1930):274; Unidentified newspaper clipping, "Declaraciones de Monseñor Ruiz, delegado apostólico," 21 September 1930, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2; José González to Pascual Díaz, 28 September 1930, LA:30; José González to Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, 22 September 1930, 29 September 1930, LA:30; Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:333. The hostility of some Catholics toward Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores and Pascual Díaz is evidenced in a document entitled "El delegado apostólico y el arzobispo de México han traicionado a la religión y a la patria," dated March, 1930 (LA:30).

³⁷ Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra to Antonio López Ortega, 16 September 1930, LA:31; Credential, Rafael Ceniceros y Villareal and José Tello, 18 June 1930, LA:31; Carreño, Díaz y el conflicto religioso, p. 55; "Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, Católica militante," in James W. Wilkie and Edna Monzón de Wilkie, Méjico visto en el siglo XX: Entrevistas de historia oral (Méjico: Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones Económicas, 1969), pp. 462-463, 473.

Palomar y Vizcarra's mission received the support of the Unión Internacional de Todos los Amigos de la LNDL de México (VITA). Founded in Europe in 1927 to disseminate propaganda about the Mexican religious conflict and to solicit support for Mexican Catholics, VITA continued its activities even after the Church and State made peace in Mexico. In late February and early March of 1931, an assembly of representatives of international Catholic organizations was held in Amsterdam. Palomar y Vizcarra and Antonio López Ortega, head of the VITA office in Rome, attended as representatives of that organization. They were accompanied by a secretary-translator, Manuel Falcón. At the end of the regularly scheduled program the Mexicans received permission to present a paper entitled "Bref Exposé de la Situation Légale des Catholiques Mexicaines en 1931." Falcón read the paper which discussed the 1926 settlement and its unfortunate consequences. The document charged that a legal tyranny existed in Mexico and that the men in power in that country wished to tear Catholicism from the hearts of the people. It concluded with the plea that Catholics throughout the world continue to offer sympathy and solicitude to their Mexican brothers. The reading of the paper was followed by more than an hour of questions, answers, and discussion concerning the religious situation

in Mexico. Finally, there was "a manifestation in favor of Mexico by all those present," who gave their cards to López Ortega and expressed their desire to keep in touch with him.³⁸

Bishop Manríquez y Zárate, a financial as well as moral backer of VITA, realized that defenders of the Mexican religious accord would not allow López Ortega and Palomar y Vizcarra to get away with the tactics they had used in Rome and Amsterdam. In a letter of March 5 the bishop advised the VITA official that Pascual Díaz and a priest named Miranda were planning a trip to the Holy See to offset the influence of the anti-arreglistas. Manríquez y Zárate advised López Ortega to maintain a low profile and to remain silent unless Díaz made statements that were obviously false and prejudicial to the cause. As the bishop had forecast, the archbishop of Mexico made a pilgrimage to Rome, where he was received by Pius XI in June of 1931. During his stay in the holy city, the Mexican prelate attempted to present the papacy with a version of the religious situation in Mexico that differed considerably from that proffered by López Ortega and Palomar y Vizcarra.³⁹

³⁸ Miscellaneous document, LA:40; Report, J. Antonio López Ortega, 5 April 1931, LA:40; "Bref exposé de la situation légale des catholiques mexicaines en 1931," February, 1931, LA:40.

³⁹ José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate to José Antonio

While the archbishop of Mexico was working in Rome to counteract the influence of the anti-arreglistas, the apostolic delegate was opposing their activities in Mexico. During the spring of 1931 the opponents of the accord on various occasions approached worshippers at the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe and invited them to special meetings. At these meetings propagandists criticized the Church-State settlement, bemoaned the present religious situation in Mexico, and advocated converting Catholic Action into political action. Reacting to these events, Ruiz y Flores issued a statement to the newspapers in June. He agreed that no one could be satisfied with the present situation in Mexico, but insisted that non-passive means of protest would provoke even greater conflict. The archbishop explained that laymen should not confuse Catholic Action, which was designed to form practicing Catholics who were conscious of their duties and knew how to apply their religion in all phases of their lives, with civic or political action. He specifically instructed Catholics to consult their priests before attending any suspicious gatherings and to distrust publications that encouraged dissension.⁴⁰

López Ortega, 5 May 1931, LA:40; Valverde Téllez, Bibliografía, 1:249.

⁴⁰ Gráfico (Mexico City), 2 June 1931.

Once again the Directive Committee viewed the apostolic delegate's declarations as a direct attack upon the LNDL. Ruiz y Flores, however, denied charges that he meant to call the members of the organization a collection of malcontents or to challenge the League's right to dedicate itself to civic action. He explained that he had only reprimanded the anonymous group of people who had signed the invitations to the seditious gatherings in question.⁴¹ The apostolic delegate's arguments failed to convince the directors of the LNDL.

A communique from the Directive Committee of the LNDL to Pascual Díaz in September discussed the reasons for the widening breach within Catholic ranks. The committee reminded the bishop that the episcopate in 1927 had given moral support to the Catholic resistance movement, had failed to condemn armed rebellion, and had allowed priests to serve as chaplains to the Cristeros. Then, in 1929 the National Guard had been forced to disband because of the modus vivendi between Church and State. The League officials charged that three specific clerical sins of omission related to the modus vivendi had caused the division between the Mexican Church and its parishioners. Ruiz y Flores and Díaz y Barreto had negotiated the pact without consulting or listening to the concerned laity.

⁴¹ Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores to Pedro Hernández, 4 July 1931, LA:40.

They had failed to get written guarantees of safety for the rebels of whom more than four hundred had been murdered since June, 1929. And, finally, the two churchmen had not insisted that Catholic parents be guaranteed the right of their children to receive a religious education. Because of these sins of omission, the Directive Committee explained, Catholics had lost faith in the Church.⁴²

Despite Catholic disillusionment with the Church and discord over the modus vivendi, the Mexican clergy and laity held elaborate ceremonies in December of 1931 to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of the appearance of Mexico's patron saint, the Virgin of Guadalupe. These celebrations antagonized leading revolutionaries and triggered a resurgence of anticlericalism in Mexico. Diverse measures were enacted at the state and national levels to weaken the hold of Catholic churchmen on the Mexican people and to restrict clerical numbers. The renewal of religious persecution reinforced the conviction of militant Catholics that the Portes Gil/Ruiz y Flores accord had been a mistake. The Cristeros resumed their war against the State, even though the Church at the time counseled against violent means of resistance. The opposition of the apostolic delegate, the archbishop of Mexico,

⁴² Directive Committee of LNLD to Pascual Díaz, archbishop of Mexico, 12 September 1931, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2.

and other prelates to the second Cristero rebellion only served to further estrange Catholic militants from the Church.⁴³

⁴³Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:351.

CHAPTER VII

A TEMPORARY TRUCE

When the Church and the State made their peace in June of 1929, a major task facing them was the return of the churches, which had been in the custody of civic committees since 1926, to the clergy. In a meeting with Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores and Pascual Díaz y Barreto on June 25, Secretary of Gobernación Felipe Canales outlined the procedures by which this would be accomplished. The archbishop of Mexico would select the priest to receive each church in the Federal District. The designated clergyman along with a delegation of ten parishioners would present himself to the appropriate civic committee. The committee would then entrust the building and its contents to him. And, the priest would register his name and that of his church with the municipal authorities.¹ Similar procedures would be enacted throughout Mexico.

Returning the churches to the clergy and the clergy to the churches was easier said than done. Influential Mexicans at all levels objected to the resumption of public worship. In some states prominent politicians, like Tomás Garrido Canabal of Tabasco and Adalberto Tejeda

¹El Universal (Mexico City), 26 June 1929.

of Veracruz, placed every possible obstacle in the path of the Church. Portes Gil realized the need to bring these recalcitrants into line. Therefore, in August Secretary Canales ordered state governments to recognize the supremacy of the federal government in matters relating to religion and instructed them to entrust religious edifices to the care of priests. While acknowledging that state legislatures had the constitutional power to limit clerical numbers according to local needs, the secretary warned that the Portes Gil administration would override any state laws on religion that exceeded this power.²

Despite the president's efforts, many Church properties, even some in the Federal District, were not restored to the custody of the clergy. In September,

²Eduardo Iglesias and Rafael Martínez del Campo [Aguiles P. Moctezuma], El conflicto religioso de 1926: Sus orígenes. Su desarrollo. Su solución., 2d ed. 2 vols. (México: Editorial Jus, 1960), 2:547; El "modus vivendi," la verdad sobre los arreglos de la cuestión religiosa, celebrados entre el lic. E. Portes Gil, y los ilustrísimos sres. Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores y Pascual Díaz (México, November, 1929), p. 19, fondo XV, "Conflictos religiosos, 1930-1937," carpeta 2, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Departamento Cultural de Condumex, S.A., México, D.F.; (hereafter cited as CEHM); Jesús García Gutiérrez, La Acción anticatólica en México, 3d ed. (México: Editorial Jus, 1959), p. 181; Jesús García Gutiérrez [Félix Navarrete], La persecución religiosa en México desde el punto de vista jurídico: Colección de leyes y decretos relativos a la reducción de sacerdotes (México, n.d.), p. 71; Alberto María Carreño, Páginas de historia mexicana: (Pages of Mexican History), Colección de obras diversas, vol. 3 (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1936), p. 75; New York Times, 26 June 1929, p. 4.

1929, Pius XI communicated with the Mexican episcopate regarding this disturbing situation. He complained that in some dioceses churches, seminaries, and other buildings had not been returned to their rightful ecclesiastic custodians. And, he bemoaned the fact that religious persecution continued in Mexico with priests and laymen being the victims of cruel injustices, despite the promises made by Portes Gil. When Ruiz y Flores subsequently protested to Felipe Canales about the government's failure to restore religious properties, the secretary explained that many of the buildings in question were currently in use for offices, meeting halls, and similar functions. To make the present occupants abandon the buildings so that the clergy and their followers could use them would, declared Canales, stir up a "hornets' nest."³

The president and the secretary of gobernación recognized that, despite the modus vivendi, anticlericalism was strong at the national as well as the state level in Mexico. Most members of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate were hostile to the Church and its personnel.

³Carreño, Historia mexicana, p. 77; Fernando Medina Ruiz, Calles: Un destino melancólico (México: Editorial Jus, 1960), pp. 155-156; David C. Bailey, ¡Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1974), pp. 292-293.

And, even in the executive branch of the government were men like Secretary of War Joaquín Amaro, who incredibly blamed the Church for all of Mexico's troubles since the time of the conquest.⁴ Faced with opposition from anti-clericals within and outside of the Federal District, Portes Gil had to move slowly and cautiously on religious matters. Even if he had been willing to risk stirring up a "hornets' nest," he was only an interim president, scheduled to leave office in February of 1930. As such, he lacked the time and power base necessary to force dissident revolutionaries into line.

The presidential election to choose a man to serve the remaining five years of Obregón's term was scheduled for November 17, 1929. Three contenders vied for the highest office in Mexico. For its candidate, the official revolutionary party, the PNR, selected Pascual Ortiz Rubio, Obregón's secretary of gobernación and Calles' obvious choice for the presidency. José Vasconcelos, Obregón's minister of education, represented the Anti-Reelection Party. And, General Pedro Triana received the support of the National Association of Agrarian Workers. Ortiz Rubio and Vasconcelos were the strongest candidates

⁴Moctezuma, Conflicto religioso, 2:547; El "modus vivendi", p. 19; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," Current History 31(1929): 581 (hereafter cited as CH).

in what proved to be a bitter, violent campaign. When the election was over, the PNR candidate emerged victorious with a reported 1,948,848 votes to 110,979 for Vasconcelos and 23,279 for Triana.⁵

During the course of his campaign, Ortiz Rubio had declared his intention to "follow the law" in matters related to religion. Following his election to the presidency, he made a good will tour to the United States. While in Washington, D. C., the president-elect informed the secretary of state that his religious policy would consist of avoiding new conflicts with the Church and smoothing out existing difficulties.⁶ The more moderate members of the Mexican episcopate were determined to follow a similar policy. The Church's experience from 1926-1929 had taught bitter lessons about the weakness of its position in Mexico, the relatively small number of

⁵ Hubert Herring, Latin America from the Beginnings to the Present, 3d ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 357; William Weber Johnson, Heroic Mexico: The Violent Emergence of a Modern Nation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968), p. 408-409; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 31:580-581; John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1919-1936 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), pp. 472, 476.

⁶ Hackett, "Mexico," CH 31:732, 996; [Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores], Recuerdo de recuerdos: Autobiografía del excmo. y rdmo. sr. dr. don Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, arzobispo de Morelia y asistente al solio pontificio (México: "Buena Prensa," 1942), pp. 100-101.

of Mexicans who would or could actively support it, and the determination of the government to force the clergy to submit to the law. Hoping to benefit from these lessons, Ruiz y Flores and Díaz y Barreto concluded that the clergy must tolerate temporarily Mexico's religious laws, exercise patience in their demands for reform, and cultivate amicable relations with the State. Not all prelates agreed with these two men as to the advisability of patience and passiveness, but the apostolic delegate and the archbishop of Mexico, as the most powerful members of the hierarchy at the time, were able to formulate Church policy in Mexico. They had negotiated the armistice between Church and State and were committed to its success.⁷

On February 5, 1930, more than 35,000 people gathered at the National Stadium in the Federal District for the inauguration of Pascual Ortiz Rubio. During the ceremony the new president promised to uphold the constitution and laws of Mexico and pledged to promote the social program of the Mexican Revolution. Following the inaugural ceremony, the president and his party proceeded to the palace at Chapultepec for the swearing in of the new cabinet

⁷The actions and statements of the apostolic delegate and the archbishop of Mexico, as described in Chapters VI, VII, and VIII of this study, substantiate the contention that these two men were anxious to insure the success of the religious accord and avoid another Church-State confrontation.

members. After the oaths were taken and a toast was drunk, the president, his wife, and his niece entered a Cadillac. Just as their car left the palace, it was fired upon by a would-be assassin. The first lady was wounded above the right ear, Ortiz Rubio was struck in the jaw by a bullet, and his niece was injured by flying glass. Although none of these wounds was fatal, the president required surgery and a three week convalescent period. As evidence of a desire for cordial relations with the State, the Mexican Church celebrated a mass to express its gratitude that Ortiz Rubio had survived the attempt upon his life. And, at a later date Ruiz y Flores personally congratulated the president on his ascension to the executive office and his narrow escape from death.⁸

The month after Ortiz Rubio became president, Pascual Díaz y Barreto issued his first pastoral letter as archbishop of Mexico. Noting that a disorientation of ideas and corruption of customs existed within his

⁸Medina Ruiz, Calles, p. 166; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, pp. 483-485; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, trans. Aurelio Garzón del Camino, 2d ed. (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1974), vol. 1, La guerra de los Cristeros, p. 355; Handbill, "Los Católicos mexicanos hemos sido traicionados por el delegado apostólico y el arzobispo de México," 15 February 1930, reel 30, Archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as LA followed by microfilm reel number); Ruiz y Flores, Recuerdo de recuerdos, p. 101. The would-be assassin, Daniel Flores, refused to implicate any other person in the attempt on the president's life. (Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, p. 486).

archdiocesis, he judged the cause to be religious ignorance. He implored his flock to intensify religious instruction, the imparting of which was not to be limited to the clergy nor confined to the interior of the churches. The prelate stressed that religious education should begin in the home and continue throughout a person's life. After reminding parents of their obligation to train their children in the faith, he added that teachers, as representatives of parents, not only should refrain from attacking the Catholic religion, but should also propagate it. Then, Díaz y Barreto reminded Catholics that adults, as well as children, required Catholic instruction. He complained that many Mexicans upon reaching adulthood invented convenient excuses for ceasing to learn about their faith. They claimed to know everything the clergy had to teach, refused to waste their time listening to "Dogmatismos," or declared that religion was a subject of interest only to women and children. Dismissing these arguments, the archbishop insisted that solid instruction in the faith was a necessity for the old as well as young and for men as well as women. Consequently, he asked that in every parish centers of Catholic instruction and circles of catequistic studies be organized to teach the principal truths of the religion to practitioners of all ages. He explained that he wanted knowledge of Catholicism

to flourish so that it might "orient the misguided; illuminate those who doubt; console the afflicted; [and] correct those who err. . . ."⁹ As these words indicated, Archbishop Díaz y Barreto believed that an intense program of religious education in Mexico would help to quiet the unrest within Catholic ranks and to strengthen the Church against its opponents.

When he emphasized the importance of religious education in this pastoral letter, the archbishop of Mexico was reinforcing ideas presented by Pius XI in an encyclical issued in December of 1929. The Pontiff had declared that any form of education not based upon the ideas of original sin and grace was unsound. Insisting that the Church had an inalienable right to "watch over the entire education of her children," he had stated that the State must respect this divinely ordained right. The Holy Father had advised that lay or neutral schools contradicted fundamental educational principles because such schools were "bound to become irreligious." Admonishing parents to provide their offspring with a Christian education, Pius XI had assured Catholics that anything

⁹ Pascual Díaz to the dean of the cathedral, the abbot of the Basilica, the clergy, and the faithful, 25 March 1930, in Alberto María Carreño, ed. Pastorales, edictos, y otros documentos del excmo. y rvmo. sr. dr. d. Pascual Díaz, arzobispo de México (México: Ediciones Victoria), pp. 3-22.

they did to promote religious schools was meritorious work.¹⁰

Bishop Lara y Torres not only recognized the importance of religious education but also realized the dangers of non-religious instruction. He feared that Mexican youth might be corrupted in lay schools run by people unsympathetic to the Church. In a letter to the apostolic delegate in April, 1930, the bishop referred to dismal conditions in his diocese of Tacámbaro. He commented that patience, as counseled by Ruiz y Flores, had its advantages but warned that the clergy might wait too long and too patiently for a remedy to the evils in Mexico. Lara y Torres voiced his concern that as time passed the Church's enemies would use the Mexican educational system to wean children away from the faith. The bishop's apprehensions were not unfounded; for, although the Constitution of 1917 specified that education would be laic, some schools in Mexico were openly anti-religious or at least anti-Catholic. When concerned parents refused to send their children to these "Godless" institutions, they were fined and ordered to let their children attend

¹⁰Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pius XI by Divine Providence Pope . . . on Christian Education of Youth (Washington, D. C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1936), pp. 3-40 *passim*.

them.¹¹

The state of Tabasco provided the Mexican Church with a vivid, if extreme, example of what could happen when her enemies were in control in the schools and elsewhere. Tomás Garrido Canabal, who governed the state directly or indirectly from 1920-1935, viewed alcohol and religion as humanity's greatest curses. During the 1920's he had sponsored anti-Catholic legislation and had encouraged the formation of workers' leagues and youth groups which propagandized against religion and alcohol. By the end of the decade he had succeeded in eliminating the Church in its institutional form from Tabasco. Not content with this accomplishment, Garrido Canabal worked to remove religion from the lives and the minds of the people. To replace religious festivals and holidays he promoted livestock and agricultural fairs. At one such fair in 1930 he exhibited some of his personally-owned livestock, which included a bull named God, an ass named Christ, a pig called Pope, and a horse called Pascual Díaz. Determined to make atheism the official creed of the state, he also took his war

¹¹ Leopoldo Lara y Torres to Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, 11 April 1930, in Leopoldo Lara y Torres, Documentos para la historia de la persecución religiosa en México de Mons. Leopoldo Lara y Torres: Primer obispo de Tacámbaro (México: Editorial Jus, 1954), pp. 739-745; Angel Castillo G., Moisés Ortiz S., José Contrera, et al. to Holy Father, 12 May 1931, LA:30.

upon the Church to the classroom. He established a system of Rationalist Schools in which the students were taught to praise the virtues of socialism and to denounce religion and alcohol.¹²

Other states were less radical than Tabasco in their dealings with the Church. Nevertheless, there were a variety of ways by which civil authorities in different states obstructed the workings of the clergy. In a letter to Pius XI in September, 1930, Lara y Torres complained that the government in Michoacán required priests to register personally in the municipalities in which they wished to perform their ministerial duties. He explained that the municipal authorities by refusing to register a clergyman could prevent him from exercising the ministry even if he had been properly designated by his hierarchical superiors. The bishop then charged that the municipal authorities in Michoacán allowed only the oldest and least spirited clerical applicants to register. Lara y Torres went on to explain that in some parts of Mexico, including Tacámbaro, clerical numbers had been so severely limited that the faithful were often deprived of the

¹² Alan M. Kirshner, "Tomás Garrido Canabal and the Mexican Red Shirt Movement" (Ph. D., diss., New York University, 1970), pp. 9-10, 12, 34-36, 29, 32, 37, 44-45. In his educational plans Tomás Garrido Canabal was influenced by a Spanish theoretical anarchist who was known for his anticlerical educational system of Rationalist Schools (Kirshner, "Mexican Red Shirt Movement," p. 31).

sacraments. His final bitter complaint was that some priests were being subjected to a personal income tax.¹³ In this letter to the Holy See, Lara y Torres mentioned but a few of the ways in which anticlericals at the state level combatted the Catholic clergy. However, their most effective weapon against the Church and the one with the most potential was the prerogative of the state legislatures to determine the number of authorized clergymen of each faith. At a later date the states were to take full advantage of this power.

Despite the Church's troubles in some Mexican states in 1930, with two notable exceptions relations between the Church and the federal government ran fairly smoothly during that year. In August at a ceremony conducted at Belén prison, Díaz y Barreto confirmed the children of some of the prisoners. For officiating at the ceremony the archbishop of Mexico was fined one hundred pesos, and the warden of the prison was fired for permitting the confirmation ceremony to occur. Discussing the reasons for these punitive actions, Secretary of Gobernación Carlos Riva Palacio explained that good relations between Church and State depended on clerical respect for the law. When a churchman violated one of Mexico's religious laws,

¹³ Leopoldo Lara y Torres to Pius XI, 24 September 1930, in Lara y Torres, Documentos, pp. 750-801, *passim*.

he and any accomplices must be punished. Pascual Ortiz Rubio presented much the same sentiments in his first annual message to Congress on September 1. Boasting that Mexico had entered a period of peaceful reconstruction, the president indicated that Church-State troubles were over as long as the clergy obeyed existing religious legislation. Ortiz Rubio would not persecute the Church, but neither would he allow its religious personnel to overstep their bounds.¹⁴

The second incident in which the Church encountered difficulties with the Ortiz Rubio administration occurred in November, when the president ordered the Mexican flag to be flown on churches throughout Mexico on national holidays. Some priests hesitated to obey the order, because national holidays were often times of "luto," and not of celebration, for the Church. This was especially true of November 20, the date commemorating the beginning of the Mexican Revolution and the first holiday to occur after Ortiz Rubio issued his decree. When one confused clergyman appealed to the apostolic delegate for guidance in the matter, Ruiz y Flores replied that in his judgment and that of "algunos Prelados" priests should comply with the measure. Acknowledging reluctantly that churches were

¹⁴ Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 33(1930):109-110; Bulletin no. 12, "VITA-México," September 1930, LA:30.

considered by law to be national property, the archbishop explained that the Mexican people would realize that the flags were displayed because of a governmental requirement and not because the Church approved of the occasion being commemorated. Despite the apostolic delegate's rationale for complying with the order, at least one priest refused to fly the flag from his church on November 20, 1930. He was fined. On subsequent occasions other Catholic clerics chose to disregard the requirement that their churches display the flag on national holidays. They too were fined. This situation continued until Pius XI almost a year later advised the clergy to submit to the order rather than suffer the consequences.¹⁵

In December the Church celebrated its own holiday, the anniversary of the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's patron saint. A Liga Anticlerical Revolucionario (LAR), headquartered in the Federal District, tried to persuade Mexicans not to participate in the religious ceremonies scheduled for December 12, 1930. The League warned women that they had been perverted in the confessional by the clergy and urged them to show

¹⁵ Hackett, "Mexico," CH 33:597; El Universal, 15 November 1930; Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores to D. Jesús del S. Lara, 23 November 1930, LA:30; Pablo Anaya to Pbo. Jesús S. Lara, 6 December 1930, LA:40; New York Times, 4 September 1939, p. 2; Pope Pius XI to Pascual Díaz and other archbishops and bishops, 12 September 1931, LA:31.

their emancipation by refusing to cooperate in the farcical Guadalupan celebrations. Charging that ecclesiastical schools were prisons for children, a LAR circular begged Mexican youth not to be used as "payasos" in the hypocritical festivities of December 12.¹⁶ The activities of the Liga Anticlerical Revolucionario did not prevent the Church from observing its holiday or convince Mexican Catholics not to participate; however, they did serve as yet another reminder that, *modus vivendi* or not, the Church still had many enemies in Mexico.

By 1931 the attacks upon the Church at the state level and the insistence of the Ortiz Rubio administration on clerical obedience to the law convinced José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate that violence was the "only remedy" for the Church's problem in Mexico. He realized that the major task facing him was to persuade the Holy See to arrive at the same conclusion. Working toward that end, he provided Antonio López Ortega in Rome with detailed information about the affronts being suffered by the clergy and laity in Mexico. The Mexican bishop also endorsed the mission of Agustín Gutiérrez, a priest who planned a trip to Rome to inform the papacy about the

¹⁶ Handbill, "a las mujeres mexicanas," Liga Anticlerical Revolucionaria, December, 1930, LA:30; Handbill, "A los niños mexicanos," Liga Anticlerical Revolucionaria, December, 1930, LA:30.

Mexican situation and "orient it well about the best manner of resolving our problems."¹⁷ Events in Mexico in the summer and fall of 1931 only served to reinforce Manríquez y Zárate's conviction that patience and petitions could not solve the Church's difficulties in that country.

In June of 1931 the legislature of Veracruz enacted a law which allowed only one minister of each sect for every 100,000 inhabitants in the state. In the press the apostolic delegate charged that the measure, which permitted no more than thirteen active Catholic priests in Veracruz, was unconstitutional. He noted that the Constitution of 1917 empowered the states to determine clerical numbers according to local needs and argued that one clergyman could not adequately meet the spiritual needs of 100,000 people. Additionally, he contended that the law violated the spirit of friendly understanding established two years earlier between the Church and the State in Mexico.¹⁸

Three bishops, each of whom had ecclesiastical jurisdiction over some part of the state of Veracruz, refused to designate the thirteen priests authorized by law,

¹⁷ José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate [Germán] to J. Antonio López Ortega, 21 February 1931, LA:31, 40; José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate to J. A. López Ortega, 20 May 1931, LA:31.

¹⁸ Excelsior (Mexico City), 11 June 1931; New York Times, 12 June 1931, p. 13; 16 June 1931, p. 56; 20 June 1931, p. 22.

because to do so would imply acceptance of the power of the state legislature to dictate clerical numbers. Instead, the prelates instructed their subordinates to remain in the churches and minister to the people until the civil authorities forced them to stop. Then, the priests were to appeal to the courts for injunctions on the grounds that the state limitation law was unconstitutional. If the courts rejected these appeals, Catholic priests were to perform their services in private residences. The members of the lower clergy complied, and some managed to obtain injunctions which allowed them to remain within the churches. However, on several occasions churches were bombed or burned and defiant clerics were at times kidnapped and expelled from Veracruz. On July 25 one priest was killed and another wounded while teaching catechism to a group of children within the confines of a church. Recognizing the dangerous situation, Ruiz y Flores authorized the clergy of Veracruz to decide for themselves whether to continue defying the limitation law. Few chose to do so, and by late July only four Catholic clergymen reportedly remained active in the state.¹⁹

¹⁹ John Lloyd Mecham, "Mexico and Central America," CH 34:(1931):755-756; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 34(1931):914; New York Times, 19 June 1931, p. 1; 23 June 1931, p. 8; 26 June 1931, p. 9; 29 June 1931, p. 5; 13 July 1931, p. 6; 14 July 1931, p. 20; 19 July 1931, p. 1; 23 July 1931, p. 11; 26 July 1931, p. 9; 28 July 1931, p. 5; 29 July 1931, p. 9; 25 August 1931, p. 14;

Deeply upset by these conditions, Rafael Guízar Valencia, the bishop of Veracruz, offered his life to Adalberto Tejeda as the price for religious liberty in Veracruz. The governor, an avowed enemy of the Roman Catholic clergy, ignored the dramatic offer. He insisted that the clergy imbued the people with fanatical ideas, opposed the state's agrarian program, squandered money on the construction of unnecessary churches, and forwarded large sums of money to Rome each year. Determined to restrict the activities and influence of the Church in his state, Tejeda insisted on enforcing the limitation law. Consequently, Guízar Valencia appealed to the president to protect Catholics in Veracruz from the governor's outrages. To the prelate's dismay, Ortiz Rubio maintained that he could not interfere in matters of state sovereignty, and he recognized the right of the Veracruz legislature to determine the number of priests allowed to practice in the state.²⁰

On July 25 Adalberto Tejeda was the victim of an assassination attempt. While in the process of enforcing the limitation law, he was shot by a young man later

Wilfred Parsons, Mexican Martyrdom (New York: Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 162; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, pp. 529-530.

²⁰ El País, 2 July 1931, LA:31; New York Times, 27 July 1931, p. 7; 31 July 1931, p. 7; La Palabra Nacionalista (Mexico City), 5 August 1931; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 35(1931):114.

identified as José Ramírez, a mentally unstable ex-seminarian. Tejeda, who recovered from his wounds, firmly believed that Catholic ecclesiastical authorities were responsible for the assault on his life. To assure churchmen that he had not been intimidated, the governor informed the press that he would continue to enforce the controversial measure. Later, in a telegram to Guízar Valencia, he charged that the Catholic clergy opposed any and every "obra de rendición humana" undertaken in

21
Mexico.

Tejeda's refusal to retreat in the face of the Church's opposition was buoyed by the support he had received from a variety of sources. In mid-July the PNR majority bloc of the Senate had endorsed his religious policies. Two weeks later the Chamber of Deputies had recorded its approval of the statute restricting clerical numbers in Veracruz. Additionally, the governors of several states had congratulated Tejeda for enforcing the limitation law and announced their plans to initiate similar measures. This support from outside Veracruz moved the governor to instruct his director of education to dismiss all primary and secondary school teachers who

²¹ New York Times, 26 July 1931, p. 1; 2 August 1931, p. 14; 8 August 1931, p. 4; La Palabra Nacionalista, 5 August 1931.

professed the Catholic faith.²²

Federal legislators not only commended Tejeda for his religious policies, but also intervened in another state to insure that the clergy there obeyed Mexico's religious laws. A statute of limitation in Durango authorized only twenty-five active clerics of each faith, but two hundred Catholic priests reportedly were performing ministerial duties there in 1930. And, these priests allegedly disregarded national, as well as state, regulations pertaining to matters of religion. To rectify this situation, the Mexican legislature removed acting Governor José Ramón Valdez from office for having "close ties" with Catholic churchmen and failing to require them to obey the law. Valdez was replaced by a federal deputy, whose purpose was to enforce civil authority over the Church in Durango. When the deposed official and the Durango legislature protested that the Mexican Congress was violating the state's sovereignty, Ortiz Rubio upheld congressional action.²³

Without congressional prompting, several other states began to restrict clerical numbers by enacting new regulations or by enforcing measures already on the books.

²² New York Times, 25 June 1931, p. 8; 15 July 1931, p. 13; 29 July 1931, p. 9; 11 August 1931, p. 6; 30 August 1931, p. 14; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 35:114.

²³ Hackett, "Mexico," CH 35:114; New York Times, 8 August 1931, p. 3; 9 August 1931, p. 3; 10 August 1931, p. 10.

Tampico reduced the number of authorized clergymen of each faith to twelve, while Yucatán and Chiapas allowed a maximum of nine. The Tabascan legislature prohibited any Catholic priest from officiating in the state. Because of the differences in the harshness of these state laws and the varying degrees to which they were enforced, the episcopate failed to adopt a uniform policy to deal with the situation. Each prelate had the authority to decide for himself and his subordinates whether to tolerate clerical reductions affecting his diocesis. As mentioned previously, the bishops with jurisdiction in Veracruz refused to designate the thirteen priests authorized by law, even though this resulted in the virtual suspension of public worship in that state. Not all members of the episcopate, however, adopted such extreme attitudes. When officials in Quarétaro began to enforce a limitation law originally enacted in 1928, Bishop Francisco Banegas Galván acquiesced. Although he believed that the number of clergymen authorized to practice in the state was deficient, he concluded that the services of a few priests were better than none.²⁴

Just as the bishops did not agree on whether to

²⁴ New York Times, 10 September 1931, p. 11; 29 September 1931, p. 2; José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate to Esteban Pincón, 14 October 1931, LA:40; Ruiz y Flores, Recuerdo de recuerdos, p. 100; Notice, Francisco Banegas Galván, bishop of Querétaro, 16 November 1931, LA:40.

comply with or to defy clerical limitation measures, they disagreed as to the action that the episcopate, the lower clergy, and the faithful should take to combat the new attacks on the Church. Ruiz y Flores believed that anti-clerical factions in Mexico wanted the federal government to sponsor a new era of religious persecution similar to that of 1925-1929. Although concerned by events in Veracruz and elsewhere, his top priority was to avoid a renewal of hostilities between the Church and the State in Mexico. He did not want the clergy or the laity to do anything that might be interpreted as unlawful defiance of civil authority or might arouse increased antagonism against the Church. Although he protested against state limitation laws and complained that they deprived many Catholics of the sacraments, the apostolic delegate advocated patience and passive means of protest. He did warn Mexican anticlericals that if they united to persecute the faithful, Catholics would in turn unify and defend themselves through legal recourse.²⁵

Other members of the Church hierarchy, such as Bishop Manuel Azpeitia Palomar of Tepic, condemned the "criminal complicity" of the federal government in sanctioning

²⁵ New York Times, 16 September 1931, p. 9; Charles C. Cumberland, Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 283; Lara y Torres, Documentos, p. 889.

activities of men like Adalberto Tejeda and Tomás Garrido Canabal. The bishop of Tepic viewed the modus vivendi as a transitory, provisional agreement that had failed to provide the Church and its practitioners with the liberties to which they were entitled. Furthermore, he believed that the Church had placed itself in an awkward position in Mexico, because for two years it had functioned under laws which it had earlier declared to be intolerable. He argued that both Catholics and non-Catholics were aware of this incongruous situation, which had resulted in a notable decline in clerical prestige.²⁶

Bishop Leopoldo Lara y Torres, a long-standing opponent of the 1929 accord, agreed that Mexican churchmen were losing stature because of their failure to take strong, direct action. He warned that each day Catholics were becoming more indifferent to the plight of the Church in Mexico and explained the apathy of the faithful as the direct result of episcopal silence and inactivity in opposing unjust laws. He insisted that members of the upper clergy should not let fear of a renewed "acción bélica" prevent them from taking forceful steps to solve the Church's problems in Mexico. The solution that he advocated was for the bishops to adopt a united front of

²⁶ Manuel Azpeitia Palomar, bishop of Tepic, to Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, 8 September 1931, LA:31.

passive resistance against Mexico's religious laws. Unity, he argued, must come quickly "before we end up by losing the few Catholics who remain to us to endorse and sustain our position before the common enemy." To best take advantage of those laymen who still remained loyal to the Church, Lara y Torres advised his fellow clergymen to abandon their prejudices against the LNDL and support that organization, because it was the logical agency to organize and direct Catholic civic action.²⁷

Bishop Manríquez y Zárate, who was still in exile in the United States, in a pastoral of October, 1931, denounced the intervention of Mexican civil authorities in ecclesiastical affairs. Lamenting that the number of priests had already been limited in Campeche, Tabasco, Yucatán, Veracruz, and Tamaulipas, he warned that similar limitations would soon occur in other states. He assured that neither he nor his subordinates would ever voluntarily submit to any state law dictating clerical numbers. After condemning each and every piece of Mexican legislation that was contrary to the welfare of the Church, he insisted that the faithful were obligated to defend their

²⁷Memorial, Leopoldo Lara y Torres to Pius XI, 12 October 1931, in Lara y Torres, Documentos, pp. 814, 817, 830, 834, 839; Leopoldo Lara y Torres to LNDL, 5 November 1931, in Lara y Torres, Documentos, p. 900; Leopoldo Lara y Torres to Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, 29 September 1931, 4 November 1931, 10 November 1931, in Lara y Torres, Documentos, pp. 807, 892, 910.

religion and resist unreasonable laws by legal means.

However, if legal means of resistance proved ineffective, he advised, Catholics could resort to violence. In his private correspondence, as in this pastoral, Manríquez y Zárate boldly mentioned armed resistance as a viable alternative for the Church's supporters in Mexico.²⁸

Because isolated incidents of violence between anti-clericals and the faithful had occurred in states with radical governors during the summer and fall of 1931, the possibility did exist that the Catholic armed resistance movement would be resurrected in Mexico. This possibility alarmed the papacy, which feared that a religious rebellion would increase hostility toward and encourage even stronger attacks upon the Mexican Church. Rome was aware that dissension resulting from the modus vivendi had left the Church with even fewer active Mexican supporters in 1931 than it had had from 1926-1929. There was little chance, if any, that the Church could hold its own in a new contest with the Mexican government. Although unhappy about "religious persecution" in Mexico, Rome preferred the clergy and the laity to tolerate the present situation

²⁸José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate, "Undécima carta pastoral que el excmo. y rvmo. sr. obispo de Huejutla dirige a sus diocesanos con motivo de la reducción de sacerdotes hecha por el poder civil," 25 October 1931, LA:32, 40; José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate to J. A. López Ortega, 19 June 1931, LA:40.

and seek to correct it through legal means rather than rebel and risk arousing the wrath of the State. Therefore, the Holy See counseled against violence and determined that, if a religious rebellion did occur, the Church would not be implicated. Accordingly, Ruiz y Flores in October informed the other members of the hierarchy that Pius XI rejected armed action because it would only serve to prejudice the cause of the Mexican Church. The apostolic delegate explained that neither the bishops nor the lower clergy were to "mix in" any movement to reconquer religious liberty by force in Mexico.²⁹

In accord with the instructions issued by the Holy See, Bishop Guízar Valencia of Veracruz in late October warned his clerical subordinates not to identify themselves with or lend moral support to any armed movement. He suggested that Catholics, rather than rebelling, pray for the governor and the legislature of Veracruz to recognize the errors of their ways and change their attitude toward the Church. Likewise, Bishop Francisco Banegas Galván, while urging Catholics in his diocesis to petition for the reform of Querétaro's limitation law, exhorted them to avoid any public demonstrations that

²⁹ New York Times, 22 June 1931, p. 3; 23 June 1931, p. 8; 26 August 1931, p. 1; 19 October 1931, p. 1; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 35:435; Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores to the bishops, 15 October 1931, LA:31; La Palabra Nacionalista, 21 October 1931.

might result in "trastornos." He explained that armed movements would hurt, more than help, the Church.³⁰

Although the Mexican Church faced serious problems in 1931, elaborate plans were made in that year to observe the four-hundredth anniversary of the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Churchmen solicited donations to cover the expenses of the several religious ceremonies planned to commemorate the sacred occasion on December 12, 1931. An organ was ordered from the United States and installed in the Basilica, and special excursion rates were established by the railroads to enable Catholics to go to the capital for the Guadalupan celebrations scheduled to begin on December 2. Thousands of people, including at least a dozen members of the episcopate, some foreign diplomats, a few cabinet officials, and a few legislators, attended the religious functions. In a special ceremony a gold crown studded with jewels was placed on the statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe to signify that she reigned in Mexico.³¹

³⁰ New York Times, 24 October 1931, p. 8; 6 December 1931, pp. 10, 23; La Palabra Nacionalista, 6 December 1931; Notice, Francisco Banegas Galván, bishop of Querétaro, 21 November 1931, LA:40.

³¹ Parsons, Mexican Martyrdom, p. 151; Miscellaneous document, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, pp. 509, 529; Carreño, Historia mexicana, p. 81; New York Times, 3 December 1931, p. 30; 16 December 1931, p. 12; La Palabra Nacionalista, 6 December 1931.

These elaborate ceremonies infuriated the Church's opponents and provided them with new ammunition to use against her. General Manuel Pérez Treviño, the ex-governor of Coahuila and minister of agriculture under Ortiz Rubio, called the Catholic observances a "vulgar farce." Luis León, director of the official PNR publication, thought that the Guadalupan holiday was a "heathenish feast." These men were not alone in their negative reactions to the religious observances. Other prominent Mexicans, including Plutarco Elías Calles, agreed that the four-hundredth anniversary celebrations were a subterfuge used by the Church to enrich its coffers and strengthen its hold on "the superstitious and uneducated peons." They determined to punish not only the clergy for conducting the services but also those Catholics who had participated in the rites.³²

Although Calles was out of the executive office, he was not out of power. Since Ortiz Rubio had entered the presidency in February of 1930, his predecessor had become increasingly active behind the scenes in Mexican political affairs. Politicians and sycophants tended to look to the Sonoran, rather than the president, for advice and guidance. Even Ortiz Rubio was not immune from Calles'

³² Cumberland, Mexico, p. 283; New York Times, 14 December 1931, p. 10; 16 December 1931, p. 30; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:358.

influence. In December of 1931 the ex-president was serving as secretary of war. When he learned that the members of Military Band #1 had played at the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe on December 12, he ordered the discharge of the musicians. Then, he visited Ortiz Rubio and intimated that the conciliatory policy of the State toward the Church should come to an end. Calles contended that, even though the Church had been subordinated to the State in the 1920's, clerical influence over the Mexican people remained too strong. He felt that steps must be taken to eradicate that influence. Calles had the president call into account those cabinet members who had attended the Guadalupan ceremonies. At least three of these officials were subsequently forced to submit their resignations.³³

Mexican congressmen followed Calles' lead in exacting retribution from people who had participated in or encouraged the Guadalupan celebrations. The Chamber of Deputies denounced Javier Sánchez Mejorada, the president

³³ La Palabra Nacionalista, 21 October 1931; Emilio Portes Gil, Quince años de política mexicana, 3d ed. (México: Ediciones Librería Botas, 1954), p. 463; Herring, Latin America, pp. 357-358; Alberto María Carreño, El exmo. y rmo. sr. dr. d. Pascual Díaz y Barreto, arzobispo de México (homenajes póstumos) (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1936), p. 25; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 35:715-716; Carreño, Historia mexicana, pp. 81, 83; Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:358; Nathaniel Weyl and Sylvia Weyl, The Reconquest of Mexico: The Years of Lázaro Cárdenas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 148.

of the Mexican National Railways, for lowering standard rates to make it easier for Catholics to visit the capital in December. The deputies also demanded an investigation of the policies of Governor Leónides Andreu Almazán of Puebla, because he had allegedly adorned the executive mansion with religious decorations and had allowed Catholics to parade through the streets of the state capital. The majority bloc of the Senate voted to expel from its membership Eleázar del Valle, who had attended the services at the Shrine and had decorated his residence with the papal colors.³⁴ In these and other ways a majority of the Mexican congressmen indicated that they, like Calles, desired to abandon the modus vivendi and attack clerical influence in Mexico.

The culmination of growing anticlerical sentiments in the legislature was the decision to enact a limitation law for the Federal District and Mexican territories. The resultant measure, which was passed by Congress on December 22 and signed by Ortiz Rubio on December 26, provided for a maximum of one minister of each faith per 50,000 inhabitants in the capital and territories.

Clergymen who wished to practice under the terms of the

³⁴ New York Times, 15 December 1931, p. 22; 16 December 1931, p. 12; 17 December 1931, p. 3; 24 December 1931, p. 8; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 35:716; La Prensa (San Antonio), 17 December 1931.

law were required to register with the appropriate civil authorities and request churches in which to serve. Once assigned to a specific church, a minister was restricted to performing his functions within that building. Civil officials who registered more than the allotted number of clerics were subject to a fine and a jail sentence. And, any unregistered priest who exercised his profession in the Federal District or the territories would be fined five hundred pesos and incarcerated for thirty-six hours.³⁵

Pascual Díaz y Barreto lost no time in protesting this measure. In a letter to the president on December 23, the archbishop of Mexico explained that he had maintained silence in the past because of a sincere desire for peace between the Church and the State. However, his obligations as a pastor and a citizen now compelled him to speak out against the regulation passed by Congress on December 22. He contended that this limitation measure not only failed to recognize episcopal jurisdiction over the clergy but also made priests mere employees of the State. Noting that Article 24 of the constitution guaranteed to all Mexicans the right to practice the religion of their choice, Díaz argued that one minister could not meet the needs of fifty thousand people and

³⁵ A copy of the law passed by the Mexican Congress in December may be found in Carreño, Historia mexicana, pp. 83-87.

declared that the new law was unconstitutional and unpatriotic. He charged that the congressional decree, which violated the armistice of June 21, 1929, reflected the wishes of a political party, the PNR, rather than the wishes of the Mexican citizenry. Consequently, the archbishop begged Ortiz Rubio to intervene on behalf of the people and persuade Congress to reconsider its action.³⁶

Ortiz Rubio, declaring that it was his duty to obey and enforce the mandates of the legislature, refused to intervene. Instead, on December 29, 1931, he had the new Secretary of Gobernación Manuel Téllez issue a statement to clarify the effects and implications of the new limitation law. The secretary explained that under the terms of the measure a maximum of twenty-five Catholic priests would be allowed to officiate in the Federal District in the new year. He assured that the purpose of the law was to restrict clerical numbers and not to deprive Catholics of their houses of worship. Consequently, church buildings, even those not assigned to a registered clergyman, could remain open. Laymen had a thirty day period in which to request custody of these buildings from the civil authorities. Churches with lay custodians could be used for those religious functions that did not require the

³⁶Open letter, Pascual Díaz to Pascual Ortiz Rubio, 23 December 1931, in Carreño, Pastorales, pp. 343-350. Copies of this letter may also be found in LA:30 and CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2.

presence of a priest.³⁷

Archbishop Díaz y Barreto appealed to Rome for guidance on how to proceed in the face of the law determining clerical numbers in the Federal District. While awaiting word from the Holy See, he realized the need to provide instructions to Catholic laymen and clergymen in his archdiocese. In a pastoral on December 31 he declared that the new congressional measure did not deserve the name of law, because it violated the liberty of conscience guaranteed to every Mexican. Reminding his flock that "the power and authority of God is the only absolute power and authority," he insisted that Catholics "must obey God always and obey men only when their authority does not contradict . . . [divine] rights." After expressing these thoughts, Díaz y Barreto ordered his clerical subordinates to remain in their posts even after the new law became effective and instructed the laity to obey the teachings of their priests. He reminded Catholics that they enjoyed "full and absolute liberty to exercise and defend [by legal means their] . . . rights as citizens, in conformity with the principles of the Christian Morality."³⁸

³⁷ El Universal, 3 December 1931; New York Times, 30 December 1931, p. 14.

³⁸ Parsons, Mexican Martyrdom, p. 168; Edict, Pascual Díaz to clergy, faithful, et al., 31 December 1931, in

Díaz y Barreto refused to select twenty-five Catholic clergymen to register with the civil authorities as required by the limitation law. When the federal government in the first few days in January began to enforce the measure and ordered unregistered priests to cease their ministerial activities, the archbishop inaugurated a campaign of passive resistance. In a pastoral on January 3 he informed the faithful that the limitation statute violated Articles 9, 24, and 130 of the Mexican constitution. He also told them that they could not properly practice their religion without the services of a priest, even if church buildings remained open. Therefore, he explained that he felt it his duty to advise both the clergy and the laity as to the best legal means of defending their violated religious rights. Reiterating his order that clergymen remain in the churches, he instructed his subordinates to apply for injunctions. Likewise, he asked laymen to seek injunctions. Hoping that a forceful legal campaign would illustrate that the Mexican legislature had not considered local needs when it allotted only one priest for every fifty thousand people, he urged Catholic lawyers to assist their co-religionists in defending their rights in court.

Carreño, Pastorales, pp. 246-254. Copies of this edict may also be found in LA:32 and CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2.

Hundreds of priests and thousands of laymen in the Federal District followed Diáz' advice and appealed to the courts for protection against the clerical reduction law. However, the judges of the district courts in the capital unanimously resolved to refuse these appeals on the grounds that the law in question did not impair freedom of religion. Because Catholic priests would not register and the courts would not grant them injunctions, public worship was suspended in the Federal District in January.³⁹

Although the difficulties between the apostolic delegate and the LNDL were not forgotten, that organization resolved to combat energetically the "tyranny" of the Church's enemies. Convinced that a well-organized opposition would force the Ortiz Rubio administration to back down, the Regional Delegation in the capital endeavored to convince as many Catholics as possible to affiliate with the League, to direct their civic activities, and to urge them to make any sacrifice necessary to defend the faith. Ruiz y Flores and Díaz y Barreto appreciated the determination of Catholic lay societies, like the League, to

³⁹ Carreño, Pascual Díaz y Barreto, pp. 24, 58; Instruction, Pascual Díaz, archbishop of Mexico, to the clergy and faithful of the archdiocese, 3 January 1932, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2; New York Times, 4 January 1932, pp. 1, 3; 3 January 1932, p. 17; 9 January 1932, p. 3; 15 January 1932, p. 22; 21 January 1932, p. 12; 24 January 1932, p. 18; Carreño, Historia mexicana, pp. 95, 97; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 35:840-841; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, p. 530.

defend religious rights in Mexico. However, the two prelates were careful to advise the LNDL that it should work "within the use of pacific and legal means paying due submission to Ecclesiastical Authorities."⁴⁰

Late in January the Holy See, which believed that the services of twenty-five priests in the capital were preferable to the clerical strike, instructed Díaz y Barreto to protest, but tolerate, the limitation law. The archbishop realized that the resumption of public worship in the Federal District under the terms of this statute would disaffect those same Catholics who had opposed the modus vivendi. Anxious to assure that discontented laymen accept the papal decision, he issued a pastoral on February 2. After stating that the pope was the successor of Peter and that the bishops were the successors of the apostles, he declared that Church officials had the right to command and the faithful had the obligation of obedience. The prelate stressed that Catholics should obey Rome's mandates, even if those mandates contradicted their own personal convictions. Three days later Díaz y Barreto directed still another pastoral to his archdiocesis. In this letter he

⁴⁰ Circular, LNDL Regional Delegation of the Federal District to local chiefs and members, 31 December 1931, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2; Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores and Pascual Díaz to the council, 19 January 1932, LA:32.

explained that the Holy See wanted the laity to understand that the resumption of public worship in compliance with the limitation law did not mean the subjugation of the Church to the State. Nor did the 1929 settlement mean that Church officials had ceased to condemn Mexico's religious laws. The archbishop asked the faithful not to confuse forced tolerance with voluntary acceptance of objectionable legislation. And, he appealed to the laity to try by legal means to achieve liberty for the Church. Although he advocated a united passive effort to remedy the evils that Catholics were suffering in Mexico, he warned against armed movements. Díaz y Barreto advised the faithful that, if they disregarded the voice of the Holy Pontiff and resorted to violence, they would not have God's blessing.⁴¹

These admonitions against violence were reinforced by the apostolic delegate. In a message to Mexican Catholics on February 12, he assured that Rome did not condemn those laymen who had risen in arms against the State in the 1920's. However, he explained, the Holy See now instructed the faithful not to consider armed resistance, which had

⁴¹ Parsons, Mexican Martyrdom, p. 169; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 35:842; Instruction, Pascual Díaz to the archdiocesis, 2 February 1932, LA:32, 40; New York Times, 5 February 1932, p. 1; Declarations, Pascual Díaz, archbishop of Mexico, to the faithful of the archdiocesis, 5 February 1932, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2.

no realistic chance of success. The papacy recommended that Catholics, rather than resorting to arms, work through Catholic Action to improve the situation of the Church in Mexico. Additionally, Ruiz y Flores again admonished the faithful against discussing or criticizing the modus vivendi which Rome denied had enslaved the Church to the State in Mexico.⁴²

Some laymen were estranged by the decision to resume public worship in the Federal District. However, as in 1929, many chose to blame the archbishop of Mexico, and not the papacy, for the situation. In a letter to the Holy See on February 13, the LNDL Directive Committee denounced Díaz' inconsistency in first defying the clerical reduction statute and then complying with it. The directors assured Rome that the Mexican laity had been working vigorously within legal means to oppose the measure. They charged that the recent acceptance of the limitation law had aggravated the religious situation in Mexico and had alienated some people from their pastors. The committee explained that Mexican Catholics saw the forced acceptance of the limitation law as a mortal blow to the jurisdiction and authority of the Mexican Church. Consequently, the LNDL directors noted that there was

⁴² Instruction, Leopoldo Ruiz, apostolic delegate, to Mexican Catholics, 12 February 1932, LA:32. This document may also be found in CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2.

growing hostility toward the archbishop of Mexico, who should have provided the Holy See with a more accurate picture of the Mexican religious situation and the desires of the faithful.⁴³

Despite the objections of some laymen, twenty-five Catholic clergymen, including Bishop Maximino Ruiz y Flores, the brother of the apostolic delegate, registered with the civil authorities. The government assigned twenty-five of the largest Catholic churches in the most populated areas of the capital to these men. On February 17 the apostolic delegate advised the Mexican people that the Holy See sanctioned compliance with the limitation law and counseled against violent protest of this or similar measures. Then, during the last week in February, 1932, public worship was resumed in the Federal District.⁴⁴

⁴³ Rafael Ceniceros Villareal, president, and José Tello, secretary, to the most Holy Father, 13 February 1932, LA:32. In 1932 Alberto María Carreño, friend and secretary to Pascual Díaz, published a book defending the archbishop's actions during the religious conflict. Entitled El arzobispo de México, excmo. Sr. Dr. D. Pascual Díaz y el conflicto religioso, the work shocked militant Catholics who claimed that it revealed to the government the names of the leaders of the resistance movement and left them open to retaliation. Because Díaz had consented to the publication of Carreño's book, some Catholics were more antagonistic than ever toward the archbishop (Rafael Ceniceros y Villareal, Miguel Palomar y Vizcarra, and Jorge Nuñez to most Holy Father Pius XI, 9 April 1933, LA:35).

⁴⁴ New York Times, 14 February 1932, p. 17; 20

February 1932, p. 2; 28 February 1932, p. 21; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 36(1932):92-93; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:359.

CHAPTER VIII

CONFLICT RENEWED

From his exile in Laredo, Texas, the militant José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate kept abreast of Mexican events. He strongly disapproved of the toleration of limitation laws in the Federal District and elsewhere. He was critical of the archbishop of Mexico and other prelates who, in order to gain a few more days of public worship in the churches allotted to the clergy, were permitting the extermination of the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico. A confirmed advocate of armed resistance, he maintained that Mexican Catholics should rebel, even if their rebellion was doomed to failure, rather than passively allow the Mexican Church to be destroyed. Although upset by the admonitions of other members of the episcopate against armed action, Manríquez y Zárate was heartened by the knowledge that as of March, 1932, scattered Catholic uprisings had occurred in Veracruz, Durango, Michoacán, Jalisco, and Morelos.¹

¹ José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate [Germán] to J. Antonio López Ortega, 6 April 1932, reel 40, Archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as LA followed by microfilm reel number); José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate [Germán] to Sr.

Those Catholic laymen who also favored the resurrection of the Cristero movement propagandized toward that end. One of the documents quoted by these militants to justify their arguments for armed defense was the controversial pastoral that Bishop Manríquez y Zárate had issued in October of 1931. The apostolic delegate and the Mexican government, both anxious to avert a major Catholic rebellion, reacted to this potentially dangerous situation. On April 30, 1932, Ruiz y Flores warned the faithful to disregard agitators who, in the name of Catholicism or of some prelate, encouraged revolution. Reiterating that the Holy See had instructed Catholics not to consider active resistance he insisted that any bishop who had endorsed rebellion had done so before the pope had issued his instructions. Less than a week after the apostolic delegate issued this warning, the Pascual Ortiz Rubio administration ordered the apprehension of Manríquez y Zárate on the grounds that his inflammatory pastoral letter attacked the constitution and laws of Mexico. Safely outside the reach of the Mexican civil authorities

D. P., 22 February 1932, LA:32; José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate [Germán] to Giuseppe Bandierra, 30 March 1932, LA:40; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, trans. Aurelio Garzón del Camino, 2d ed. (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1974), vol. 1, La Guerra de los Cristeros, p. 373.

the bishop was amused by the order for his arrest. Aware that Catholic militants were using his pastoral to incite insurrection in Mexico, he was pleased that his words were inspiring the laity to arise in defense of their rights and those of the Church.²

As was his practice, Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores chose to blame the LNDL for much of the agitation among Mexican Catholics. Fearing that the activities of the League reflected unfavorably upon the Church, he resolved once again to ask the organization to change its name and program. He was especially desirous that the LNDL avoid systematic hostility toward the Mexican government and the Mexican Revolution. In a circular on April 8 the apostolic delegate informed the other members of the episcopate of his intentions concerning the League.³

The Directive Committee saw in Ruiz y Flores' actions the culmination of a long-standing policy of hostility toward their organization. Although insisting that they were docile sons of the Church, the directors resolved to suspend for an indefinite period of time the activities

² La Prensa, n.d., LA:40; New York Times, 2 May 1932, p. 6; 5 May 1932, p. 1; La Epoca (Mexico City), 8 May 1932; José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate to Esteban Picón, 7 May 1932, LA:40.

³ Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores to director of La Opinión (Los Angeles), 21 July 1932, LA:40; President and secretary of LNDL to Pascual Díaz, 19 May 1932, LA:40.

of the League rather than renounce its history and traditions by implementing the requested changes. They formally announced their decision in a bulletin dated May 8. The officials sent a copy of this bulletin to the archbishop of Mexico along with a letter of explanation. They insisted that in past years the LNDL had offered to change its name if Ruiz y Flores would obtain a written order to that effect from the Holy See. Even though he had never produced such an order, the organization had omitted the word religion from its name. Despite this concession the apostolic delegate had continued to insist upon additional changes, which had convinced the Directive Committee that he actually hoped to alter the identity of the League. Therefore, the directors explained, they had been forced to defend the identity and integrity of their association by rejecting Ruiz y Flores' suggestions. In his reply to this letter, Díaz y Barreto evidenced little sympathy for the plight of the LNDL. After expressing his own disillusionment with the organization, he maintained that he could not comment upon the actions of the apostolic delegate, who had acted in accord with the dictates of the papacy and of his own conscience.⁴

⁴ Declarations and resolutions, Directive Committee of the LNDL, 8 May 1932, LA:40; President and secretary of LNDL to Pascual Díaz, 19 May 1932, LA:40; Pascual Díaz to president and secretary of LNDL, 25 May 1932, LA:40.

During the same month that the Directive Committee resolved to suspend the activities of the LNDL, two more states passed limitation laws. A measure enacted by the Michoacán legislature in mid-May not only restricted clerical numbers but also prohibited archbishops, bishops, and papal delegates from officiating in the state. Later in the month the legislature of the state of México limited to thirty-four the number of ministers of each faith allowed to remain active. In both instances the prelates with ecclesiastical jurisdiction strongly protested against these new laws and asked laymen to work for their reform. However, these same bishops concluded that toleration of the restrictive measures was better than the suspension of public worship in Michoacán and México. Therefore, they designated the allotted number of priests to register with the civil authorities in each state.⁵

The continuing campaign against the Church in Mexico caused rebellion to spread to Zacatecas by the end of May.

⁵ Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," Current History 36(1932):475 (hereafter cited as CH); New York Times, 17 May 1932, p. 7; 26 May 1932, p. 2; Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, archbishop of Morelia, Manuel Fulcheri y Pietrasanta, bishop of Zamora, and Leopoldo Lara y Torres, bishop of Tacámbaro, to Michoacán Catholics, June, 1932, LA:40; Pascual Díaz to Filberto Gómez, 25 May 1932, in Alberto María Carreño, ed., Pastorales, edictos, y otros documentos de excmo. y rvmo. sr. dr. d. Pascual Díaz, arzobispo de México (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1938), pp. 351-356; Edict, Pascual Díaz to the dean of the cathedral, abbot of the Basilica et al., 31 May 1932, in Carreño, Pastorales, pp. 255-260.

Adhering to the instructions of the Holy See, Bishop Ignacio Placencia y Moreira of Zacatecas instructed priests in his diocese not to associate with any armed movement on penalty of suspension. And, he ordered the clergy not to administer the sacraments to the rebel leaders, who were guilty of disobedience to ecclesiastical authority. The Catholics who were in a state of rebellion in Zacatecas and elsewhere were distressed by the instructions handed down from Placencia to his subordinates. In a letter to the Vatican on June 24 several insurgents protested the bishop's injunction against administering the sacraments to the leaders of the resistance movement. Because they faced the danger of death, the rebels argued that they had more right than anyone else to receive the sacraments. Stressing that the purpose of renewing armed defense in Mexico was not only to defend the Church but also to reconquer lost liberties, the signators informed the papacy that they would fight in every way possible against tyranny in Mexico.⁶

Sensitive to the feelings of the laity, the archbishop of Durango also addressed a letter to Rome on

⁶ Circular no. 7, Ignacio Placencia y Moreira, bishop of Zacatecas, 31 May 1932, LA:40; Eulalio Pérez to Giuseppe Bandierra, 30 July 1932, LA:40; Antonio A. Canales to Ignacio Placencia y Moreira, bishop of Zacatecas, 9 August 1932, LA:33; Petition, Carlos Castro, Miguel Granda et al. of the National Guard to the pope, 24 June 1932, LA:40.

June 24. José María González Valencia wrote that Mexican Catholics had lost their traditional esteem for the bishops, who adopted a benign attitude toward the persecutory revolutionaries and a severe attitude toward the defenders of the Church. He warned that the breach between the clergy and the faithful in Mexico was so severe that it might lead to a schism. He also criticized prelates like Ruiz y Flores who protested limitation laws but tolerated them. While thanking God that officials in Durango had not yet chosen to attack the Church, he charged that the federal government encouraged local authorities to persecute the Church and the clergy.⁷

Nevertheless, the apostolic delegate and the archbishop of Mexico persisted in their attempts to keep Mexican Catholics from rebelling against the State. On July 25 in a circular to his clergy Pascual Díaz y Barreto repeated that the papacy advised against armed action, looked unfavorably upon the suspension of public worship, and admonished against criticizing the modus vivendi. Noting that the pope hoped for a crusade of

⁷ José María González y Valencia, archbishop of Durango, to most Holy Father, 24 June 1932, fondo XV, "Conflicto religioso, 1930-1937," carpeta 2, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Departamento Cultural de Condumex, S. A., México, D.F. (hereafter cited as CEHM); Archbishop González y Valencia's thanks were premature because in December of 1932 the number of Catholic clergymen allowed to exercise the ministry in Durango was limited to twenty-five (New York Times, 16 December 1932, p. 1).

prayer and penitence in every parish, the archbishop emphasized the importance of Catholic Action and the need for the laity to work for legal reforms. Three days later the apostolic delegate also complained that certain elements in Mexico were anxious to rebel and advised that the Holy See reproved of recourse to arms in the present situation.⁸

The frequent, repeated attempts by these two churchmen to oppose the armed defense movement only served to worsen the breach within Catholic ranks. In an open letter in August three belligerent laymen asked Ruiz y Flores whether he represented the Holy See or tyranny in Mexico, and they asked if the Vatican had ordered Ruiz y Flores and Díaz y Barreto to become faithful defenders of the Mexican Revolution. This letter, which was intended for public circulation, contained a postscript which asked everyone who read it to pray for Pius XI to remove the apostolic delegate and the archbishop of Mexico from their ecclesiastical offices.⁹

Significantly, by the summer of 1932 the Mexican

⁸ Circular no. 21, Pedro Benavides, secretary [for Pascual Díaz], to priests of archdiocesis, 25 July 1932, LA:33, 40; Declaration, Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, apostolic delegate, 28 July 1932, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2.

⁹ Open letter, José Gutiérrez, Raul C. Ontiveros, and Miguel de los Ríos to Apostolic Delegate Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, n.d., CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2. A copy of this letter may also be found in LA:33.

government, as well as the Church in Mexico, was suffering from internal discord and disunity. Although Pascual Ortiz Rubio held the position of president, power was actually wielded by Plutarco Elías Calles, the "Jefe Máximo de la Revolución." Since coming to office, the conservative Ortiz Rubio had alienated not only the powerful Sonoran but also prominent members of Congress and of the PNR. By August Calles was sufficiently disillusioned to withdraw his support from the incumbent administration and to counsel his followers to do likewise. Faced with this opposition from within revolutionary circles, the president considered the advisability of stepping down from office, a move which Calles strongly endorsed. Accordingly, on September 2 Ortiz Rubio submitted his resignation to Congress. After accepting the resignation, the two houses of the Mexican legislature met in a joint session to select a provisional president to fulfill the remainder of Ortiz Rubio's term. The congressmen designated Abelardo Rodríguez, who had served as secretary of gobernación and secretary of war under Ortiz Rubio, to assume the executive office. The choice pleased Calles and received his approval.¹⁰

¹⁰ L. Vincent Padgett, The Mexican Political System (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), p. 33; William Weber Johnson, Heroic Mexico: The Violent Emergence of a Modern Nation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968), p. 409; Lázaro Cárdenas, Obras (México:

The apostolic delegate and the archbishop of Mexico prayed that the new executive might provide some relief for the Church and its parishioners. Both men congratulated Rodríguez on his ascension to the presidency and expressed their fervent hopes that he would restore to the Mexican people their lost rights and liberties. However, Rodríguez' speeches and actions quickly revealed that he would follow the example set by his predecessors and comply with the Constitution of 1917.¹¹ The Church could not hope for miracles from him.

By late September, 1932, the Holy See acknowledged that the new administration was no improvement for the Church in Mexico. Concluding that the modus vivendi was a lost cause, Pius XI finally spoke out against "The New Persecution of the Church by the Mexican Government." In an encyclical dated September 29 he recalled the tumultuous events of 1926-1929. He accused the State of having promised in 1929 to apply religious laws in a reasonable

Universidad Autónoma de México, 1972), vol. 1, Apuntes, 1913-1940, p. 205; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 37:(1932):85-86; Hubert Herring, Latin America from the Beginnings to the Present, 3d ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 358; Abelardo Rodríguez, Autobiografía (México: Novaro Editores Impresores, 1962), p. 143.

¹¹[Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores], Recuerdo de recuerdos: Autobiografía del excmo. y rdmo. sr. dr. don Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, arzobispo de Morelia y asistente al solio pontificio (México: "Buena Prensa," 1942), p. 101; Alberto Bremauntz, Material histórico de Obregón a Cárdenas (México: Talleres Litográficos de "Avelar Hnos. Impresores," 1973), pp. 136-138.

manner and then of having broken its word by intensifying religious persecution. He denounced the assassinations of Catholic laymen, the failure to return all Catholic churches to the custody of the clergy, and the placing of restrictions upon the number of priests allowed to exercise their functions in various states. Pius XI also lamented that religious instruction was prohibited in the Mexican primary schools and that frequently attempts were made "to induce [teachers] . . . to become purveyors of irreligious and immoral teachings." According to the pope, the best solution to these problems was for Mexican priests and parishioners to protest against but comply with Mexico's religious laws and to "give utmost attention to the question of the education and the formation of the young."¹²

Abelardo Rodríguez failed to appreciate the fact that Pius XI had advised the clergy and laity to comply with Mexico's laws and to use only passive means of protest. Incensed by the pope's allegations of religious persecution in Mexico, the president claimed that the encyclical was full of falsehoods. He charged that the Catholic clergy were unwilling to resign themselves to losing

¹²The Church and Mexico: On the Persecutions of the Church by the Mexican Government, Encyclical letter of His Holiness Pope Pius XI (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1932), pp. 3-17.

dominion over the Mexican people and that Pius XI's words incited clerical elements to violence. The president warned that he would not tolerate interference from any outside power and pledged that, if the defiant and insolent attitude of the Holy See persisted, he would convert the churches in Mexico into schools and factories.¹³

In his capacity as apostolic delegate, Ruiz y Flores circulated the controversial encyclical and defended it against the president's charges. On October 3 he informed the press that Rodríguez had misinterpreted the pope's message. He emphasized that the encyclical ordered the Catholic clergy and laity to tolerate the laws, to use only peaceful means of protest, and to intensify Catholic Action. The papal delegate argued that passive opposition to oppressive laws was not rebellion, but a duty imposed by God. Explaining that the pope, like God, exercised jurisdiction over the entire world, Ruiz y Flores insisted that the Holy See could instruct Catholics everywhere in their duties and obligations.¹⁴

¹³John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1919-1936 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), p. 562; Emilio Portes Gil, Autobiografía de la revolución mexicana: Un tratado de interpretación histórica (México: Instituto Mexicano de Cultura, 1964), p. 674; New York Times, 3 October 1932, p. 6; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 37:206.

¹⁴Declarations, Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, 30 October 1932, LA:33, 40.

On the same day that the apostolic delegate defended the encyclical to the press, the Chamber of Deputies resolved to request his deportation on the grounds that he was an undesirable alien. Although Ruiz y Flores was a native Mexican, the deputies contended that he had renounced his citizenship by declaring his allegiance to a foreign power, the Holy See. A delegation from the Chamber asked the president to take the steps necessary to exile the apostolic delegate. Rodriguez acquiesed. As a result, on October 4 the archbishop was taken into custody by two agents of the Department of Gobernación and forced to leave Mexico.¹⁵

On October 7 Archbishop Díaz was also arrested because he had officiated in various churches in the Federal District without registering with the civil authorities. The prelate explained that he had not believed himself subject to the same requirements that applied to members of the lower clergy. Informed that he was subject to the law, Díaz y Barreto was detained overnight and fined five hundred pesos. Upon his release he registered as the only priest legally authorized to officiate in the national cathedral and returned to his post there. Possibly

¹⁵ New York Times, 4 October 1932, p. 7; 5 October 1932, p. 1; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 37:206; Excelsior (Mexico City), 4 October 1932.

fearing that his own arrest and the deportation of the apostolic delegate would incite some Catholics to violence, the archbishop immediately issued another pastoral letter counseling against rebellion.¹⁶

Bishop Manríquez y Zárate believed that the Mexican government had committed a blunder by deporting the apostolic delegate, because he had worked diligently to prevent Catholics from resorting to arms. Viewing the expulsion as a "providencial" act, the bishop of Huejutla hoped that it would convince Mexican pacifists that legal means of protest were ineffective against a persecutory government. Additionally, he realized that the absence of Ruiz y Flores from Mexico might prove beneficial for those laymen who had been in conflict with him and who had suffered under the weight of his demands. Therefore, although convinced that the Rodríguez administration had been unjust and barbarous in its treatment of the apostolic delegate, Manríquez y Zárate could not help but have ambiguous feelings about the incident.¹⁷

To the dismay of the bishop of Huejutla, Ruiz y

¹⁶ New York Times, 8 October 1932, p. 5; 18 October 1932, p. 6; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 37:340; Edict, Pascual Díaz to the dean of the cathedral, the abbot of the Basilica, et al., 7 October 1932, in Carreño, Pastorales, pp. 261-269.

¹⁷ José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate to J. Antonio López Ortega, 10 October 1932, LA:33.

Flores from his exile in the United States continued to oppose violence. In mid-November he ordered the clergy in his archdiocese of Morelia to advise the faithful to adhere to the Holy See's instructions and to abstain from participation in armed movements. He stated categorically that rebellion to defend the Church or to modify the Mexican political situation was prohibited.¹⁸

Catholics who were fighting against the State represented the passive attitude of some Church officials in Rome and Mexico. Most of the insurgents were men who had participated in the Cristero rebellion of 1927-1929. They now viewed that movement as but the first phase in a war against a radical, despotic government controlled by Plutarco Elías Calles. They insisted that they were fighting not for the Church but for their own abused rights and liberties, such as freedom of worship and freedom of education. Arguing that under these circumstances no one, not even the papacy, had the authority to prohibit armed defense, they asked the clergy to maintain neutrality in the matter. The rebels, who operated under the slogan of "liberty and guarantees," vowed to fight with or without the blessing of the Church until they achieved their goals or died in the attempt.¹⁹

¹⁸ Titular Bishop Ruis María Martínez of Morelia to the priests of the archbishopric, 12 November 1932, LA:41.

¹⁹ Circular 18-32, Fernando Munguía, chief of

The major goals of the insurgents were expressed in a manifesto signed by E. J. Alcides of the National Guard in Veracruz on November 12, 1932. He explained that he was rebelling against a government that treated honest men like bandits and tried to impose communism upon Mexico. Alcides asked the people to arise and establish a government free from Calles' control and to reestablish the Constitution of 1857 without the Reform Laws.²⁰ Rebel leaders in other states made similar appeals to the Mexican populace in coming months and years.

While the rebels made war upon the government, Mexican Church leaders followed Pius XI's advice and gave special attention "to the question of the education and the formation of the young." For example, Pascual Díaz in a pastoral on January 25, 1933, endorsed the Central Commission for Religious Instruction, an organ of Catholic Action. Bemoaning that sad circumstances prevented children from receiving Christian education in the schools, he stressed the importance of establishing centers of Catholic studies in every church and parish. Other members of the

military operations in Michoacán, to heads of sub-committees and delegations, 25 November 1932, LA:41; Manifesto, a northern group of revolutionaries to the patriots of Guadalajara, November, 1932, LA:34; Notice, to citizens and officers of the National Guard, 11 June 1932, LA:40; E. J. Alcides to Pascual Díaz, 28 February 1933, LA:35.

²⁰Notice, E. J. Alcides, 21 November 1932, LA:41.

episcopate likewise concerned themselves with propagating
²¹ programs of religious education throughout Mexico.

Churchmen were more concerned than ever with intensifying programs of religious instruction because their influence in the Mexican school system was being steadily eliminated. Narciso Bassols, secretary of education under Pascual Ortiz Rubio and Abelardo Rodriguez, was an ardent revolutionary and an avowed Callista. Since coming to office in 1931, Bassols had endeavored to bring all schools in Mexico under the direct jurisdiction of the federal government and to make laic education a reality at the secondary, as well as primary, level. Anxious to maintain a close surveillance over public and private schools, he had assigned special investigators to visit educational institutions throughout the country and assure that they were not being used as "centers of antirevolutionary and clerical propaganda."²²

²¹Pascual Díaz to the dean of the cathedral, the abbot of the Basilica, et al., 25 January 1933, in Carreño, Pastorales, pp. 118-129; La Palabra Nacionalista (Mexico City), 14 February 1933; 7 March 1933; Alberto María Carreño, Páginas de historia mexicana: (Pages of Mexican History), Colección de Obras Diversas, vol. 3 (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1936), p. 155.

²²Clemintina B. de Bassols, "Aspectos de su vida," in Clemintina B. de Bassols et al., Narciso Bassols en memoria (México, 1960), p. 6; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, p. 559; Verna Carleton Millan, Mexico Reborn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939), p. 53; Albert Louis Michaels, "Mexican Politics and Nationalism from Calles to Cárdenas" (Ph. D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1966),

Besides attempting to eliminate clerical influence from primary and secondary schools, Bassols tried to orient the Mexican curriculum to meet the needs of the proletariat. Advised of national problems related to venereal diseases, unprofessional abortions, and unwanted children, he appointed a committee to study the advisability of providing instruction in physiology and hygiene to Mexican youth. The committee's report, which was published in May, 1933, recommended that the Department of Education establish and direct sexual education in the public schools. Despite this recommendation, Bassols did not immediately integrate sexual education courses into the Mexican curriculum because he realized that such courses were controversial, but he indicated his desire to do so in the near future.²³

p. 111; Decree, Pascual Ortiz Rubio and Narciso Bassols, 19 April 1932, LA:33; Carreño, Historia mexicana, pp. 111, 113; La Palabra Nacionalista, 17 February 1933. In December of 1931 Pascual Ortiz Rubio, possibly at the instigation of Narciso Bassols, had decreed the secularization of secondary education in Mexico. Responding to this action, Pascual Díaz in January of 1932 had prohibited Catholic youth from attending laic schools and instructed the faithful to send their children only to Catholic educational institutions (Pascual Díaz to fathers of families, in Carreño, Pastorales, 162-167).

²³Millan, Mexico Reborn, pp. 51-52, 54-55; James W. Wilkie, "Sexual Education and Socialist Education in Mexico--The Early 1930's" in James W. Wilkie and Albert L. Michaels, eds., Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval, 1910-1940 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 201; Antonio Luna Arroyo, ed., La obra educativa de Narciso Bassols: Documentos para la historia de la educación

Many parents were concerned over the policies of the secretary of education. In May, 1933, several Mexicans formed the Asociación National Pro Libertad de Enseñanza (ANPLE) and endeavored to establish branches of the association throughout the country. Working in conjunction with the LNDL, which ended its suspension in June, 1933, members of the ANPLE devoted themselves to propagandizing for liberty of education and to safeguarding the rights of parents and children in each school in Mexico. Similarly, parents' clubs, called Padres de Familia, watched over the activities of the secretary of education and remained ready to combat him whenever necessary. The Padres de Familia contended that they had the right to determine the kind of education that their children received. Specifically opposed to sex instruction, they vowed to boycott schools before allowing the "sinister designs" of Narciso Bassols to corrupt their children.²⁴

University students joined concerned parents in denouncing the "sinister designs" of the secretary of

pública en México (México: Editorial Patria, 1934), p. 86; J. H. Plenn, Mexico Marches (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1939), p. 178.

²⁴ Project, ANPLE Director Center, May, 1933, LA:35; Circular no. 1, Directive Committee of LNDL, 9 June 1933, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2; Manifesto, Padres de Familia to Mexican people, 27 October 1933, LA:35.

education. Mounting opposition to Bassol's policies by the fall of 1933 led to student strikes in Jalisco and Durango. Calles opined that the clergy and other opponents of the Revolution were behind the upheaval in these states. In a session on November 20, Chamber of Deputies accorded a unanimous vote of confidence to the Jaliscan government which was taking strong steps to end the student strike. And, the PNR bloc in the Chamber named a five man commission, headed by Alberto Bremauntz, to study educational problems in Mexico and present specific proposals for reforming Article III of the constitution.²⁵

Even as this committee was deliberating, some two thousand members of the PNR convened in Querétaro on December 3 for their second national convention. As the result of a proposal made several months earlier by Calles, the delegates considered and adopted a written blueprint to guide national development during the next presidential term, 1934-1940. The Six Year Plan, which

²⁵ Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 39(1934):464; La Palabra Nacionalista, 9 November 1933; 22 November 1933; 27 November 1933; David L. Raby, Educación y revolución social en México (1921-1940), trans. Roberto Gómez Ciriza, Sep Setentas, vol. 141 (México; Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1974), p. 39; Alberto Bremauntz, La educación socialista en México: Antecedentes y fundamentos de la reforma de 1934 (México: Imprenta "Rivadeneyra," 1943), pp. 171-172.

proposed radical changes in many aspects of Mexican life, was designed "to raise the standards of living of workers, to establish a final minimal wage, to develop education vigorously, to complete Mexico's agrarian program, and to help Mexico's relations with foreign countries."²⁶

In the realm of education the Six Year Plan promised significant and far-reaching changes. Recognized as a social institution, the primary school was to serve the people by imparting truthful, rational, and scientific answers to questions in the minds of the students. Accordingly, the PNR would sponsor the reform of constitutional Article III to achieve State control of the educational system and to insure instruction "based on the orientations and postulations of the socialist doctrine upheld by the Mexican Revolution." To improve the quantity as well as quality of Mexican education, the plan provided for federal expenditures in education to increase from 15 percent of the national budget in 1934 to 20 percent in 1940. During that same period, state and municipal governments were expected to spend annually for education at least as much as they had in 1933. And, from one thousand to three thousand new rural schools . . .

²⁶ New York Times, 4 December 1933, p. 13; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," p. 50; Herring, Latin America, p. 359.

would be opened in Mexico each year.²⁷

After adopting the Six Year Plan, the delegates at Querétaro selected the man to bring it to fruition. They nominated Lázaro Cárdenas as the PNR candidate for the presidency from 1934-1940. Cárdenas, who had been a brigadier general at age twenty-five, governor of his home state of Michoacán, president of the PNR, and minister of war under Rodríguez, was a popular man of leftist sentiments.²⁸ Although there would be other candidates for the executive office, the Mexican political system was such that the revolutionary party's candidate was assured of victory in the July, 1934, election.

Although Calles was responsible for the formulation of a written program to orient national development from 1934-1940, he was not necessarily committed to the resultant Six Year Plan. The Sonoran was becoming increasingly conservative in his personal views and political philosophy. However, he recognized that there was a growing leftist element in Mexico which demanded the fulfillment of the promises of the Mexican Revolution.

²⁷ The Mexican Government's Six Year Plan 1934 to 1940: Complete Textual Translation of the Revised Plan and General Lázaro Cárdenas' Nomination Address Explaining How He Will Abide by the Plan during His Administration (México: Trans Agency News for Newspapers, n. d.), pp. 29-37, *passim*.

²⁸ Hackett, "Mexico," CH 39:591; Millan, Mexico Reborn, p. 64.

As a shrewd politician, Calles chose to pacify this sector by sponsoring a plan which proposed radical measures and by accepting Lázaro Cárdenas as the next president of Mexico. Although he paid lip service to the Six Year Plan, Calles intended to continue guiding the Mexican government from behind the scenes. He expected Cárdenas to accept his tutelage just as other recent presidents had done.²⁹

Shortly after the Querétaro convention ended, the legislative committee headed by Alberto Bremauntz presented its conclusions to the Chamber of Deputies. Blaming prejudice and fanaticism for sewing discord among the people and unleashing opposition to the Mexican Revolution, the five men insisted that revolutionaries in Mexico had the right to impart their doctrines to succeeding generations. Therefore, the committee proposed that Congress amend the Constitution of 1917 to provide for socialist, rather than laic, education in the schools. Even though Congress did not move immediately to amend Article III, the recommendations of

²⁹ Wayne A. Cornelius, "Nation Building, Participation and Distribution: The Politics of Social Reform Under Cárdenas," in Gabriel A. Almond et al., eds., Crisis, Choice, and Change: Historical Studies of Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), pp. 402-404; Millan, Mexico Reborn, p. 64; New York Times, 31 July 1933, p. 6.

this committee, coupled with the educational provisions of the Six Year Plan, made socialist education a realistic possibility for Mexico by the end of 1933.³⁰

Alarmed by the likelihood of socialist and sexual education in the schools, the apostolic delegate from exile in the United States advised the Mexican episcopate to decide upon and undertake a program of united action. Accordingly, on December 29 Archbishop Díaz y Barreto in a circular letter asked his fellow prelates for their opinions on the following questions: (1) What attitude should the hierarchy assume with regard to the proposed reform of Article III? (2) What instructions should the clergy give to parents, teachers, and school administrators on this subject? (3) What were the most effective means of combating the government's irreligious propaganda? Replies to this inquiry quickly revealed that the Mexican episcopate favored taking strong steps to combat an amendment to Article III and advising laymen to do likewise.³¹

³⁰Bremauntz, La educación socialista, p. 183; La Palabra Nacionalista, 16 December 1933.

³¹Lyle C. Brown, "Mexican Church-State Relations, 1933-1940," Journal of Church and State 6(1964):202-203; Form letter, Pascual Díaz to each member of the Mexican episcopate, 29 December 1933, LA:35; Leopoldo Lara y Torres to Pascual Díaz, 12 January 1934, LA:41.

Ruiz y Flores lost no time in providing norms to the Mexican clergy and laity. On behalf of the Executive Episcopal Committee he advised active members of the PNR that they could not receive the sacraments unless they disassociated themselves from the official party. With regard to the proposed reform of Article III, he stated that Mexicans who opened or directed schools offering socialist education were subject to excommunication. Similarly, parents who sent their offspring to socialist schools and adolescents who voluntarily attended such schools could be excommunicated. Having issued these grave warnings, the apostolic delegate instructed the faithful against reading any material that challenged Catholic dogma or attending any irreligious gatherings. Finally, he impressed upon parents the need to provide their children with a Christian education.³²

Catholics reacted emotionally to threats of socialist or sexual education in the schools because they believed that both were designed to tear children away from their faith and to destroy their religious morals. In January rumors began to spread to the effect that sexual education courses were being offered in some schools. Stories circulated about the unclean and perverse acts that

³² Norms, Executive Episcopal Committee to the clergy and Catholics, 4 January 1934, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2. A copy of this document may also be found in LA:36.

children were forced to perform in "sex" classes.

Alarmed parents began to consider means of protesting the policies of the secretary of education and of protecting their children from corruption. They were not calmed or comforted by Bassol's insistence that no program of sexual instruction had been implemented in the Mexican educational system because they believed that some teachers had taken it upon themselves to offer the reprehensible courses. The ANPLE consequently organized parents in the Federal District and proposed a boycott of any schools offering sexual or socialist education.

In the same vein the Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia (UNPF) formed strike committees to determine which schools should be boycotted, recommended that members ostracize socially anyone teaching the controversial classes, and asked mothers to send letters of protest to the president.³³

The preachings of the clergy intensified the hysteria of Catholic parents. In a confidential letter to his priests on February 5, 1934, Díaz y Barreto

³³ Millan, Mexico Reborn, pp. 55, 57; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 113-114; La Palabra Nacionalista, 9 January 1934; 10 January 1934; 16 January 1934; 21 January 1934; 28 January 1934; 1 February 1934; 8 February 1934; 9 February 1934; 10 February 1934; Luna Arroyo, Narciso Bassols, p. 89; Circular, UNPF to delegates, center presidents, and sector heads, January, 1934, LA:36.

recommended a true crusade to intensify religious instruction in Mexico. Besides advising clerics to dedicate themselves to catequistic studies, he told them to instruct parents in their duties. Stating that Pius XI disapproved of sexual education, Díaz maintained that Catholics should check their children's textbooks for irreligious passages and should question their children about what they were learning in the schools. He told the priests that parents who failed to provide their children with a religious education were unworthy of receiving the sacraments, as were parents who failed to keep their children from attending schools where they might be perverted. Following the instructions in this pastoral, Catholic clergymen did everything possible to spread religious education and to encourage the laity to oppose Narciso Bassols by nonviolent means.³⁴

Reacting to clerical admonitions and to fantastic rumors, an increasing number of Catholics in the Federal District and other parts of Mexico became involved in the protest movement. At the instigation of the UNPF more than seven thousand people in Aguascalientes gathered to decide upon a plan of action for opposing sexual

³⁴Raby, Educación y revolución, p. 163; Carreño, Historia mexicana, pp. 155-159; Confidential instruction, Pascual Díaz to the clergy, 5 February 1934, in Carreño, Pastorales, pp. 195-206.

education. They ultimately decided upon a student strike. Mothers in Colima organized a public demonstration against sex instruction in the schools. And, mothers in Michoacán and Hidalgo wrote to President Rodríguez and asked him to protect their children's innocence against the corrupting influence of Narciso Bassols. Catholics in other states also held protest rallies, declared student strikes, and sent petitions to the president.³⁵

In the midst of this upheaval the LNDL held its third general convention and committed itself to the fight against socialist and sexual education. The delegates at the convention, which met on April 1, resolved that the League as always would defend and try to restore religious, family, and property rights in Mexico. They declared that the organization would awaken civic consciousness among the Mexican people, make parents realize their responsibilities to the children, oppose schools that wanted to tear children from their faith and sink them in immorality, and encourage the proliferation of confessional schools.³⁶ Thus, the LNDL allied itself with the other enemies of

³⁵ La Palabra Nacionalista, 5 February 1934; 21 February 1934; 1 March 1934; 2 March 1934; 10 March 1934; 23 March 1934; 9 May 1934; Millan, Mexico Reborn, p. 57.

³⁶ Resolutions, Third General Convention of LNDL, 1 April 1934, LA:36; La Palabra Nacionalista, 4 May 1934.

Bassols and his policies.

On April 7 numerous Mexicans attended a protest demonstration held at the Juárez monument in the capital. Participants carried placards with slogans, such as "Bassols is an enemy of children" and "Our virgins are better dead than changed into prostitutes." Several speakers delivered tirades against the controversial policies of the secretary of education. After a time policemen attempted to disperse the crowd and clashed with the demonstrators, who subsequently charged that the officials had been unnecessarily brutal. However, the chief of police insisted that his men had restricted themselves to conserving order.³⁷

Some three weeks after this protest demonstration was held the archbishop of Mexico issued yet another set of instructions to his priests. He noted that the problems and dangers cited in his pastoral of February 5 still existed. Declaring that socialism was the enemy of religion, he explained that all Catholics were obligated to impede by legal means the offering of socialist education. He again stressed the need for the faithful to oversee the teachings being offered to their children and added that parents should remove their children from

³⁷ La Palabra Nacionalista, 7 April 1934; 8 April 1934; 9 April 1934; 15 April 1934.

school, if necessary, to protect them from bad influences. He told his priests to pass these instructions on to the faithful and to warn teachers and directors involved with socialist education that they risked excommunication.³⁸ The clergy did as they were told.

The influence of the Catholic clergy and the activities of the ANPLE and the UNPF resulted in numerous student strikes in the Federal District by early May. This situation caused Bassols on May 9 to submit his resignation as secretary of education. In a separate letter to the president, Bassols blamed the clergy and other reactionary elements for the present upheaval in Mexico. Denouncing the traditional hostility of the Church to the Mexican Revolution, he cited numerous instances in which churchmen had opposed his educational policies in the past. Charging that clerical associations had maintained a constant state of agitation since 1932, he explained that the culmination of their efforts was the move to paralyze schools in the Federal District through student strikes. He observed that ecclesiastics and their followers claimed to be combating not the Mexican Revolution but the secretary of education. Dismissing this claim, Bassols expressed his

³⁸Instruction, Pascual Diaz to the clergy, 30 April 1934, in Carreño, Pastorales, pp. 207-223, *passim*; Brown, "Church-State Relations," p. 204.

firm conviction that these groups were in reality opposed to revolutionary principles and policies. As he explained to Rodríguez in this letter, he hoped that his resignation would remove this deception and unmask the enemies of the Revolution.³⁹

Abelardo Rodríguez replied immediately to this letter. Although he accepted the resignation, he indicated his support of Bassols and his educational policies. The president expressed his dismay that the clergy had created a crisis over a problem that did not exist, i.e., sex instruction in the schools. And, he expressed his gratitude to Bassols for the work that he had done as secretary of education. Then, on May 10 Rodríguez named Narciso Bassols to the post of secretary of gobernación. Eduardo Vasconcelos, who had formerly occupied this position, became secretary of education.⁴⁰

Catholics were ecstatic that their hated opponent was no longer secretary of education. On Mother's Day,

³⁹ "Jesús Silva Herzog, economista e historiador," in James W. Wilkie and Edna Monzón de Wilkie, Méjico visto en el siglo XX: Entrevistas de historia oral (Méjico: Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones económicas, 1969), p. 669; La Palabra Nacionalista, 7 April 1934; 16 April 1934; 17 April 1934; 24 April 1934; 1 May 1934; Narciso Bassols to Abelardo Rodríguez, 9 May 1934, in El Universal, 10 May 1934.

⁴⁰ Abelardo Rodríguez to Narciso Bassols, 9 May 1934, in El Universal, 10 May 1934; New York Times, 11 May 1934, p. 13; Dulles, Yesterday in Méjico, p. 560.

May 10, a commission of Mexican women went to Chapultepec Castle to express to the president their pleasure at Bassols' resignation. Two days later the strike committee for the Federal District resolved unanimously to end the boycott of schools in the capital. A group of mothers informed Vasconcelos of the end of the student strike.⁴¹

Many influential Mexicans agreed with Bassols that the Roman Catholic Church was largely responsible for the recent upheaval in Mexico. More determined than ever to restrict the influence and activities of the priesthood, anticlericals retaliated. The director general of education in Hermosillo impressed upon school officials the need to wage a campaign to free Mexican youth from religious prejudices and fanaticism. Manuel Páez, the governor of Sinaloa, decreed that a maximum of twenty clergymen could practice in his state and that no more than ten of these could be Catholic. Sonora's Governor Rudolfo Elías Calles, the son of the Jefe Máximo, took even stronger steps against the Church. He was furious that ecclesiastics had charged the government with corrupting children in sex education courses and that clerical elements had sponsored student strikes. So, he closed the Catholic churches in Sonora and ordered all

⁴¹ La Palabra Nacionalista, 9 May 1934; 11 May 1934; 13 May 1934; Millan, Mexico Reborn, p. 57.

Catholic priests to leave the state. He informed them that they could return when they were ready to comply with the law and to cease their obstructionist activities against the State.⁴² Because of the actions of men like the three mentioned above, the Church paid dearly for its opposition to sexual and socialist education.

⁴² La Palabra Nacionalista, 13 May 1934, 17 May 1934; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," CH 40 (1934):473; New York Times, 21 May 1934, p. 5; 22 May 1934, p. 11; 27 May 1934, p. 22.

CHAPTER IX

CALLES, CARDENAS, AND THE CHURCH

Following his nomination as the PNR presidential candidate, Lázaro Cárdenas conducted a vigorous campaign in which he visited all of the Mexican states. He wanted to become personally acquainted with the needs and problems of Mexicans in each region and to allow the people to become acquainted with their next president and his political views. He told the voters about his three main interests: agrarian reform, education based on socialism, and establishment of worker's cooperatives. Cárdenas let the people know that he was committed to the Six Year Plan and to the principles of the Mexican Revolution. In his speeches the nominee cited three abused liberties as Mexico's main enemies: 1. liberty of conscience, which was a euphemism for clerical dictatorship, 2. liberty of education, which allowed the reaction to interfere with the government's revolutionary program, and 3. economic liberty, which ran counter to the financial betterment of the people. Cárdenas pledged to correct these abuses.¹

¹William Weber Johnson, Heroic Mexico: The Violent Emergence of a Modern Nation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968), p. 412; Donald E. Worcester and Wendell G. Schaeffer, The Growth and Culture of Latin America, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971),

During his travels the PNR candidate expressed his views on religion and education. He contended that religion taught the proletariat to resign themselves to their lot in life when, instead, they should struggle constantly to improve it. Declaring that each moment that Mexicans spent on their knees was a moment stolen from humanity, Cárdenas indicated his desire to emancipate his countrymen from their spiritual bonds. Especially convinced of the need to remove clerical influence from education, he vowed that

if the people make me president . . . I will not permit the clergy to intervene in popular education in any way. . . . The Revolution cannot tolerate the clergy's continuing to utilize the youth of the country as instruments with which to divide the Mexican nation. . . . ²

He explained that Mexican schools under State, rather than under ecclesiastical control, would meet the needs of the child, instill in him the ideology of the Mexican Revolution, and prepare him for collectivist work. Thus,

vol. 2, The Continuing Struggle for Independence, p. 305; Howard F. Cline, The United States and Mexico, rev. ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 218; Albert Louis Michaels, "Mexican Politics and Nationalism from Calles to Cárdenas" (Ph. D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1966), p. 55.

²William Cameron Townsend, Lázaro Cárdenas: Mexican Democrat (Ann Arbor, Michigan: George Wahr Publishing Co., 1952), p. 80; Antonlin Piña Soria, Cárdenas socialista (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1935), p. 125; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," p. 150; John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1919-1936 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), p. 588.

Cárdenas told the voters, the way would be paved for the social, political, and economic betterment of the masses.³

Cárdenas was not the only man campaigning for the presidency in 1934. Adalberto Tejeda of Veracruz represented the Partido Socialista de las Izquierdas, and the liberal General Antonio Villareal was the nominee of the Confederación Revolucionaria de Partidos Independientes. Hernán Labordi, a radical, also ran for the executive office. Nevertheless, the Mexican populace responded to the personality, policies, and promises of Lázaro Cárdenas, who scored an overwhelming victory in the July 1 election.⁴ On November 30, 1934, an avowed leftist committed to the Six Year Plan would be inaugurated as president of Mexico.

In the five months between Cárdenas's election and his assumption of office, the religious situation in Mexico deteriorated drastically. Plutarco Elías Calles was partially responsible for this occurrence. Speaking in Guadalajara on July 20, he launched a new offensive

³The Mexican Government's Six Year Plan 1934 to 1940: Complete Textual Translation of the Revised Plan and General Lázaro Cárdenas' Nomination Address Explaining How He Will Abide by the Plan during His Administration (México: Trans Agency News for Newspapers, n. d.), pp. 81-82; Lázaro Cárdenas, Obras, (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1972), vol. 1, Apuntes 1913-1940, pp. 298.

⁴Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, pp. 579-580; New York Times, 1 June 1934, sect. IX, p. 8; 2 July 1934, p. 6.

against the Roman Catholic Church. The Jefe Máximo informed his countrymen that the Mexican Revolution was entering a new stage, "el periodo revolucionario psicológico," in which it must destroy existing prejudices and form a new national soul. Warning that schools in many states were under the direction of reactionary, ecclesiastical elements, he advised Mexicans that they must tear their children from the claws of conservatives. Calles insisted that clerical influence must be removed from the field of education. Catholic clergymen and laymen viewed this grito de Guadalajara as an act of open aggression against the Church and revolutionaries interpreted it as a signal to intensify their anticlerical activities.⁵

Ironically, on the same day that Calles delivered his

⁵ La Palabra Nacionalista (Mexico City), 21 July 1934; Josefina Z. Vázquez Knauth, "La educación socialista de los años treinta," Historia Mexicana 18(1969):411-412; Alberto María Carreño, Páginas de historia mexicana: (Pages of Mexican History), Colección de obras diversas, vol. 3 (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1936), pp. 137, 139, 141-143; James W. Wilkie, "Sexual Education and Socialist Education in Mexico--The Early 1930's," in James W. Wilkie and Albert L. Michaels, eds., Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval, 1910-1940, p. 202; Lyle C. Brown, "Mexican Church-State Relations, 1933-1940," Journal of Church and State 6(1964):204-205; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 150-151; Bulletin, Asociación Nacional de Libertad de Enseñanza, 27 July 1934, reel 36, Archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as LA followed by microfilm reel number).

Guadalajaran address, ten men in Cerro Gordo, Veracruz, issued a manifesto denouncing the Jefe Máximo. Declaring that the only word needed to characterize the regime that repressed them was "Calles," they announced an armed liberation movement to terminate the Sonoran's rule and to recover lost liberties in Mexico. Because violence sustained the tyrant, they claimed the right to use violence against him. The authors did not incorporate themselves with other insurgents already in the field or endorse a specific constitution or leader; however, they pledged their friendship to those Mexicans who opposed Calles and their enmity to his supporters. And, the signators explained that they would recognize as the head of the Mexican government the person who most clearly adhered to and agreed to guarantee their aspirations. This Cerro Gordo manifesto of July 20, 1934, with its denunciation of Calles' rule and promise of a more acceptable national leader attracted many adherents in the months after it was issued.⁶

In August Bishop José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate issued a pastoral message addressed to the civilized world

⁶Manifesto, Alcibiades de la Torre, Rafael M. Morán, Segismundo García Cadena et al. to Mexicans, 20 July 1934, LA:36; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 148-149.

in reply to the grito de Guadaljara. He claimed that the Jefe Máximo had issued a challenge to the Mexican people when he had said that youth belonged to the Revolution. The bishop begged the faithful not to allow their children to become the prey of the "Bolshevik monsters" in Mexico. Insisting that Catholics must defend themselves by the same means with which they were attacked, he warned that the faithful would use force if their opponents did. Manríquez y Zárate declared that the issue at stake was the future of the Mexican nation, which rested on the purity of its children.⁷

The "Bolshevik monsters" in Mexico agreed that the future of their nation was at stake. Therefore, they worked with renewed vigor to weaken the hold of organized Catholicism on the Mexican people. Revolutionaries had long contended that Mexico had too many houses of worship and too few schools and libraries. For some time both the federal government and various state governments had followed the practice of closing Catholic churches and sometimes dedicating the buildings to civic uses. This practice became increasingly common as the controversy between Church and State worsened in 1934.⁸

⁷ Brown, "Church-State Relations," pp. 205-206; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 31-32; Emilio Portes Gil, Quince años de política mexicana, 3d ed., (México: Ediciones Botas, 1954), pp. 499-500.

⁸ Wayne A. Cornelius, "Nation Building, Participation

In August Archbishop Pascual Díaz y Barreto protested the closing of Catholic temples. He reminded Abelardo Rodríguez that the Constitution of 1917 required all religious acts to be performed within the confines of the churches and asked how this could be done if the buildings were closed. He begged the president to alleviate the situation. Although Rodríguez was one of the Mexicans who believed that the country had an excessive number of houses of worship, he recognized the need to curb the arbitrary acts of some radical state officials and to standardize the practice of retiring religious buildings. Consequently, he placed the secretary of gobernación in sole charge of closing churches and instructed state governors to refrain from acting on their own initiative in this matter.⁹

and Distribution: The Politics of Social Reform Under Cárdenas," in Gabriel A. Almond et al. eds., Crisis, Choice, and Change: Historical Studies of Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), p. 415; New York Times, 7 November 1934, p. 29. Alberto María Carreño, utilizing material from Diario Oficial (Mexico City), claims that 56 Catholic churches were seized from November, 1931, to December, 1933. Jean Meyer writes that 127 churches were retired in 1934 and that 264 were confiscated in 1935 (Carreño, Historia mexicana, p. 193; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, trans. Aurelio Garzón del Camino, 2d ed. (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1974), vol. 1, La guerra de los Cristeros, p. 363.)

⁹Pascual Díaz to Abelardo Rodríguez, 1 August 1934, in Alberto María Carreño, ed., Pastorales, edictos y otros documentos del excmo. y rvmo. sr. dr. d. Pascual Díaz, arzobispo de México (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1938),

The president's decision to have the federal government supervise the retirement of religious buildings did not provide Catholics with the relief that Archbishop Díaz had sought. Officials in several states disregarded Rodríguez' instructions and persisted in closing churches at their own discretion. Furthermore, the president and the secretary of gobernación had every intention of retiring any houses of worship that seemed unnecessary. In fact, in his annual message to Congress on September 1, the executive proudly announced that his administration had expropriated forty Catholic churches and converted them to more useful purposes. He indicated that the national government would continue this practice during the remainder of his term.¹⁰

During the fall of 1934 revolutionaries also moved to amend the constitution in accord with the Six Year Plan and the advice given by Calles in his *grito de Guadalajara*. Late in September the PNR Comité Ejecutivo Nacional (CEN) drafted a proposed revision to Article III. The proposal declared that education should be socialistic, should exclude all religious doctrines, should combat fanaticism,

pp. 358, 365; Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," Current History 41(1934):344 (hereafter cited as CH); New York Times, 12 August 1934, sect. IV, p. 8.

¹⁰Hackett, "Mexico," CH 41:213-214. Only 375 churches were open in Mexico by March of 1935 (New York Times, 18 March 1935, p. 10).

and should provide Mexican youth with a rational concept of the universe. Religious corporations were not to interfere with or offer financial aid to educational institutions and private schools would be allowed only with official authorization. This measure was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies for its consideration.¹¹

Members of the CEN knew that their proposal would meet with strong popular opposition. For months Catholic churchmen had been condemning socialist education in their pastorals and sermons. Already some Mexican parents had participated in demonstrations against the reform of Article III and had declared strikes in schools where teachers were reportedly imparting socialist doctrines. Responding to these circumstances, the CEN accused the clergy of having agitated against socialist instruction since the PNR had adopted the Six Year Plan in December of 1933. The committee charged that it was illogical, absurd, and criminal for clergymen and clerical elements to have opposed the amendment to Article III before its text was even formulated.¹²

¹¹ Alberto Bremauntz, La educación socialista en México: Antecedentes y fundamentos de la reforma de 1934 (México: Imprenta "Rivadeneyra," 1943), p. 263; Carreño, Historia mexicana, pp. 165, 167, 169.

¹² Bremauntz, La educación socialista, p. 324; Townsend, Lázaro Cárdenas, p. 78; La Palabra Nacionalista, 27 September 1934.

The Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia answered the charges hurled by the CEN. The organization explained that parental alarm had been occasioned and justified by the Six Year Plan, Calles' Guadalajara speech and press reports of tentative proposals to reform Article III. The UNPF accused the PNR of wanting to destroy the moral training of Mexican youth and to subvert the rights of the family and of private property. The Padres de Familia vowed to defend their children's rights and liberties, especially in the realm of education. In keeping with this vow, concerned parents circulated propaganda against the president and increased the number of student strikes. They were joined in their activities by some university students, who also opposed mandatory primary and secondary education based on socialism.¹³

The concerted opposition of parents and university students did not prevent Mexican congressmen from considering the proposed reform of Article III. Although debates in the Chamber revealed considerable confusion among revolutionaries as to the meaning of socialist education, the deputies on October 19 approved of the

¹³ La Palabra Nacionalista, 30 September 1934; 5 October 1934; 6 October 1934; 8 October 1934; 10 October 1934; 22 October 1934; Bremautz, La educación socialista, pp. 324-325; Carreño, Historia mexicana, p. 149; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 41(1934):344.

amendment. Nine days later the Senate concurred.¹⁴ The measure was then submitted to the states for approval. When two-thirds of the Mexican states ratified the amendment, it would become law.

The day after the Chamber approved of the reform of Article III approximately twenty thousand Mexicans in the capital demonstrated against socialist education and clashed with policemen and firemen. During the next week groups of parents entered several schools in the Federal District and attempted to impede their normal functions, which also resulted in violent confrontations between civilians and civil officials. President Rodríguez strongly condemned the activities of these subversive elements. He authorized the chief of police and the secretary of education, both of whom blamed the clergy for the unrest in the capital, to close schools when necessary to preserve peace and order. The Mexican situation was sufficiently tense by October 23 to cause the Rodríguez administration to prohibit the sale of arms and ammunition throughout the country.¹⁵

Congressmen also placed responsibility for the

¹⁴ Vázquez Knauth, "Educación socialista," pp. 412-413; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 41:343.

¹⁵ La Palabra Nacionalista, 12 October 1934; 16 October 1934; 17 October 1934; 18 October 1934; 19 October 1934; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 41:344.

turbulence in Mexico on the clergy and their followers.

On October 20 the Chamber of Deputies approved of a four-point plan to remedy the crisis: (1) to ask the president to expel the episcopate, (2) to close pro-clerical publications, (3) to form armed assault groups to combat the opposition, and (4) to purge government offices of employees unsympathetic to the Mexican Revolution. After this program was adopted, a commission of deputies went to Cuernavaca to consult with Calles. The Sonoran not only agreed that the bishops should be ejected from Mexico but also charged that they were in the process of organizing a rebellion. When this charge subsequently appeared in the newspapers, Díaz y Barreto denied that the episcopate was guilty of sedition. This denial did not sway Calles, who became even more antagonistic toward the Church when Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores on October 24 declared that no Catholic could be a socialist or a member of the PNR and urged the faithful to organize to assert their rights.¹⁶

¹⁶ New York Times, 21 October 1934, p. 3; 26 October 1934, p. 15; Carreño, Historia mexicana, pp. 177-179; La Palabra Nacionalista, 6 October 1934; 20 October 1934; 25 October 1934; 26 October 1934; Declarations, Archbishop of Mexico doctor don Pascual Díaz, 25 October 1934, fondo XV, "Conflict religioso, 1930-1937," carpeta 2, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Departamento Cultural de Condumex, S.A., México, D.F. (hereafter cited as CEHM); Brown, "Church-State Relations," pp. 206-207.

Even though the apostolic delegate and other churchmen repeatedly counseled the faithful to oppose socialist education, many Mexicans chose to support the State's educational program. In Nogales on October 28 three thousand people paraded with banners sporting anticlerical and pro-governmental slogans. On that same day in the national capital two hundred thousand laborers and civil employees demonstrated in support of Rodríguez and Cárdenas. Reviewing the procession, the president and the president-elect enjoyed the sight of placards reading "We demand socialist education" and "Socialist education means freedom from Catholic oppression." The thousands who participated in these October 28 demonstrations were among the many Mexicans who refused to submit to clerical dictates.¹⁷

In 1934, as in earlier years, there were various reasons why Mexicans supported the government rather than the clergy. Many people out of idealism, self interest, or a combination of the two wanted to see significant revolutionary reforms achieved. These citizens naturally aligned themselves with the State. Others took this stand because they had no other realistic option.

¹⁷ New York Times, 29 October 1934, p. 9; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 41:345; La Palabra Nacionalista, 29 October 1934; Josephus Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), p. 134.

Federal employees who refused to participate in the October 28 demonstration subsequently lost their jobs, as did school teachers and administrators who failed to support the government's educational policies. Fear of dismissal, coupled with more subtle forms of persuasion, caused many Mexicans--whatever their personal beliefs and feelings--to think carefully about which side to take in the Church-State controversy.¹⁸

Calles left no doubt as to where he stood on religious matters. Allegedly convinced that Catholic prelates were organizing a rebellion, he was determined that the government should take strong action. He desired the expulsion of the episcopate and sent Cárdenas to the president with that message. Although Rodríguez was usually receptive to the suggestions of the Jefe Máximo, he hesitated to act arbitrarily and worsen the already tense Mexican situation. Accordingly, he resolved to work through legal channels to bring to justice any members of the hierarchy guilty of sedition. In a letter to Attorney General Emilio Portes Gil on October 30, the president declared that Catholic churchmen had undertaken a "campaign of open sedition," which followed the

¹⁸ New York Times, 21 October 1934, p. 3; 5 November 1934, p. 2; 16 November 1934, p. 15; Townsend, Lázaro Cárdenas, p. 79; Bremauntz, La educación socialista, p. 319.

historical principle of combatting the conquests achieved by Mexican people through their Revolution. Insisting that the government could not allow this clerical agitation of the populace to go unpunished, Rodríguez asked the attorney general to determine which prelates were responsible for the upheaval in Mexico and to take appropriate action against the guilty parties. To assist Portes Gil in this task, the president provided him with "proofs and papers," including letters allegedly written by the apostolic delegate and intercepted by the government.¹⁹

Portes Gil did not take long to conclude his investigation. At the end of the first week in November he informed Rodríguez that two prelates had blatantly provoked unrest in Mexico. According to the attorney general, Bishop Manríquez y Zárate had criticized the Mexican government and had incited "Catholics to rise in arms." And, Archbishop Ruiz y Flores had allegedly "made formal and direct incitement to commit the crime of rebellion."

¹⁹ Emilio Portes Gil, Autobiografía de la revolución mexicana: Un tratado en interpretación histórica (México: Instituto Mexicano de Cultura, 1964), pp. 683-684; Portes Gil, Quince años, p. 502; New York Times, 31 October 1934, p. 1; Emilio Portes Gil, The Conflict between the Civil Power and the Clergy: Historical and Legal Essay by Emilio Portes Gil, Attorney General of the Republic (México: Press of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1935), p. vii; Francis Clement Kelley, Blood-Drenched Altars, rev. ed. (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Bruce Publishing Company, 1935), p. 330; Criterio, 4 November 1934, LA:36.

To substantiate these charges, Portes Gil quoted from the bishop of Huejutla's "Message to the Civilized World" and correspondence of the apostolic delegate. After the attorney general compiled a formal document containing his findings, a judge in the Federal District issued warrants for the arrest of the two prelates. However, both men were already in exile in the United States and were outside the jurisdiction of the Mexican courts. ²⁰

Largely at Calles' instigation, Portes Gil published his report in a book entitled The Conflict between the Civil Power and the Clergy: Historical and Legal Essay, which was published in Spanish and English. In addition to the evidence and charges against the bishop of Huejutla and the apostolic delegate, the work contained an elaborate, one-sided history of the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico. It denounced the temporal power, wealth, and conservatism of the clergy from the colonial period to the twentieth century and decried clerical attempts to unite with other conservative elements to block the "onward

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Jesús García Gutiérrez [Félix Navarette], La lucha entre el poder civil y el clero a la luz de la historia o sea comentario al estudio histórico y jurídico del señor licenciado don Emilio Portes Gil, procurador general de la república (El Paso, Texas: Revista Press, 1935), p. 5; Portes Gil, Quince años, pp. 503-504; Emilio Portes Gil to Abelardo Rodríguez, 7 November 1934, in Portes Gil, The Civil Power and the Clergy, pp. 115-134, *passim*; New York Times, 12 November 1934, p. 11; 16 November 1934, p. 15; Hubert Herring, "Mexico," CH 41:471-472.

March" of the Mexican Revolution. Portes Gil's essay insisted that the Church's historical role in Mexico and current clerical activities forced the government to take strong steps to insure that the Church and its religious personnel submitted to the law.²¹ Thus, The Conflict between the Civil Power and the Clergy justified not only the government's decision to bring charges against two prelates but also the strict policies of the State on religious affairs in the 1930's.

The day after the attorney general presented the results of his investigation to the president, Archbishop Díaz justified the Church's opposition to the State's socialist education program. He told a New York Times correspondent that Calles, the PNR, the secretary of education, and Congress had admitted that they intended to establish anti-religious instruction in the schools. Therefore, the archbishop insisted, clergymen and laymen had no choice except to oppose the amendment to Article III with all that it implied. Díaz said that Catholics were expected to resist by legal means the establishment and diffusion of socialist education and to withdraw their children from schools offering this type of instruction. As for the clergy, he explained that their tasks included the following: (1) instructing loyal families as to their

²¹Portes Gil, Quince años, pp. 505-506; Portes Gil, The Civil Power and the Clergy, pp. 3-112, *passim*.

duties and responsibilities, (2) warning teachers that they risked excommunication if they participated in the State's educational program, and (3) advising administrators that they were heretics if they allowed socialist doctrines to be imparted in their schools.²²

On November 15 Attorney General Portes Gil announced that two-thirds of the Mexican states had ratified the amendment to Article III. When the federal government enacted the necessary enabling legislation, socialist instruction would become mandatory in the Mexican schools. However, the PNR leadership realized that they must act slowly and carefully in implementing this controversial reform, which had already caused so much trouble in Mexico. Hoping to calm the tense situation, the party announced that it would not act in haste. But, this announcement failed to allay the anxieties of Catholic churchmen and laymen, who intensified their efforts to prevent Mexican youth from being exposed to socialist education.²³

Persistent Catholic opposition with its inflammatory propaganda, protest demonstrations, and student strikes antagonized officials in several states. Blaming

²² New York Times, 9 November 1934, pp. 1,3; Herring, "Mexico," CH 41:472.

²³ New York Times, 16 November 1934, p. 15; 25 November 1934, p. 18.

prelates and priests for inciting the populace to mutiny, several state governments during the fall of 1934 had moved to limit or eliminate clerical influence. The Morelos legislature enacted a law permitting only one minister of each faith for every 75,000 people and requiring each active minister to swear that he had never participated in a rebellion. Durango allowed a maximum of 9 clergymen per sect and Aguascalientes authorized only 5. Tamaulipas and Chihuahua refused to allow any priests to perform their functions. Civil authorities in Guerrero, Chiapas, Zacatecas, Colima, and Sinaloa actually ordered the expulsion of Catholic clerics from their states. Additionally, officials in Colima and Zacatecas closed the Catholic churches within their jurisdictions. These and earlier state measures retiring churches and restricting clerical numbers had a noticeable cumulative effect by the end of 1934. By that time some thirteen Mexican states had closed all or almost all Catholic houses of worship within their borders and only 322 Catholic priests were legally authorized to perform their offices in Mexico.²⁴

²⁴ La Palabra Nacionalista, 3 September 1934; 21 September 1934; 21 October 1934; 24 October 1934; 30 October 1934; 2 November 1934; 3 November 1934; 5 November 1934; New York Times, 26 August 1934, p. 6; 1 November 1934, p. 5; 3 November 1934, p. 16; 23 November 1934, p. 9; Hackett, "Mexico," CH 41:345; James W. Wilkie, "Statistical Indicators of the Impact of the National

This was the situation in Mexico at the time that Lázaro Cárdenas became president. The country was torn by religious strife. Catholic churchmen counseled resistance to the government's educational program. Popular opposition to socialist education was widespread. Mexican rebels were fighting against the State. And, in diverse ways federal and state officials were waging a cold war upon the Church and clergy. Assuming office under these circumstances, the new president faced serious challenges that demanded a great deal of time, attention, and ingenuity.

Plutarco Elías Calles--through his Guadalajara speech, his charges against the clergy, and his insistence upon Rodríguez' acting against the episcopate--was at least partly responsible for the difficulties Lázaro Cárdenas faced upon becoming president. An avid anticlerical, Calles, while president himself, had revealed his strong dislike for the Catholic Church and his compulsion to subject it to State control. Thus, it was not out of character for him to criticize that institution or warn against clerical influence. Nor was it unusual for him to encourage others to act upon his recommendations. With these facts in mind one may feel that Calles' actions in

regard to the Church in 1934 require no further analysis. However, one must ask why the Jefe Máximo chose to renew his assault upon the Church precisely in the six month period preceding Cárdenas' inauguration.

Calles delivered his speech in Guadalajara just two months after Narciso Bassols, a staunch Callista, was forced to resign as secretary of education. Calles may have felt the need to repay the clergy and their cult for the trouble they had caused his partisan. This personal desire for revenge may suffice to explain the timing of Calles' burst of open aggression against the Church.²⁵ Nevertheless, there may have been a less obvious but more significant explanation for his actions.

For a decade Calles had been the leading figure in Mexican political life. From 1928-1934 his own political views had tended toward a more conservative orientation, especially in terms of labor and agrarian reform. In July, 1934, the Jefe Máximo found himself faced with a president-elect who not only was radical in his political beliefs but also enjoyed a strong following among the Mexican citizenry. Under these circumstances, Calles may well have felt threatened. Jealous of his own power and desirous of hampering Cárdenas' reform program, the Sonoran may have seized upon the religious issue as a

²⁵Carreño, Historia mexicana, p. 137.

tool to achieve his own ends. By purposely aggravating the Church-State conflict, the political boss possibly hoped to force Cárdenas to turn to him (Calles) for advice and guidance. Calles also may have hoped that the new president would be so occupied with religious affairs that he could not devote much attention to the Six Year Plan.²⁶ If these were indeed the Sonoran's goals, he was partially successful. His *grito de Guadalajara* and subsequent actions did intensify the Mexican religious crisis and did require a great deal of attention from Cárdenas after he assumed office. However, the new president was soon to prove himself capable of handling religious and other matters without the interference of the Jefe Máximo.

²⁶ Johnson, Heroic Mexico, p. 403; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 11, 151; Worcester and Schaeffer, Latin America, 2:305-306; Townsend, Lázaro Cárdenas, p. 80; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:361; Portes Gil, Quince años, p. 507; Fernando Medina Ruiz, Calles: Un destino melancólico (México: Editorial Jus, 1960), p. 179.

CHAPTER X

A TROUBLED YEAR

Lázaro Cárdenas was inaugurated on November 30, 1934. In his address to the nation the new president announced that his campaign tour through Mexico had familiarized him with the problems facing the Mexican Revolution and pledged to follow the Six Year Plan in solving these problems. To assist him in his presidential duties he selected an interesting assortment of politicians, many of whom had close ties with Plutarco Elías Calles and had been involved in religious and educational affairs in the past. Narciso Bassols became minister of finance, and Emilio Portes Gil was appointed secretary of foreign relations. Rudolfo Elías Calles was secretary of communications and public works. Tomás Garrido Canabal was Cárdenas' selection for secretary of agriculture. Ignacio García Téllez was chosen to head the ministry of education, while Juan de Dios Bojórquez, a Sonoran, assumed the position of secretary of gobernación.¹

¹ Silvano Barba González, La lucha por la tierra (México: Editorial del Magisterio, 1964), vol. 4, Lázaro Cárdenas, pp. 163, 165; New York Times, 1 December 1934, pp. 1, 7.

When Garrido Canabal came to the capital late in November to attend the inauguration, he brought with him a contingent of militant Tabascan youths, members of an organization known as the Red Shirts. On November 29 the Red Shirts marched in a parade honoring Calles, who congratulated them and their leader for the fine work they had done in Tabasco and cited their accomplishments as an example for other states to follow. Garrido Canabal interpreted this statement to mean that he and the Red Shirts should extend their anticlerical activities to Mexico City. After formally assuming his secretarial post, Garrido Canabal placed on his office walls signs bearing slogans like the following: "Religion is the obstacle to the progress of the people" and "The belief in God had been the cause of oppression and the backwardness of people." Approximately one hundred of the young Tabascans remained in the capital after the inauguration. The secretary of agriculture watched in approval as this small brigade organized "Red Saturdays" and "Red Sundays" during which they spread anti-religious and anti-Catholic propaganda. At times the Red Shirts gathered outside of churches where services were being held and harassed the worshippers, which created tension in and around the Federal District.²

²Alan M. Kirshner, "A Setback to Tomás Garrido

On December 30, a band of the young Tabascans gathered in front of the Church of San Juan Bautista, Coyoacán. Shouting anticlerical slogans, they planted their black and white flag near the church building. Worshippers grew angry and tempers flared. A clash resulted in which the Red Shirts killed five Catholics and then retreated to a nearby municipal building. Unaware of these events, Ernesto Malda, a tardy Red Shirt, arrived upon the scene. At the sight of his red shirt, the infuriated crowd of Catholics lynched him. When police arrived, they placed sixty-four of the Tabascans in custody and arrested three Catholics for the murder of Malda.³

Canabal's Desire to Eliminate the Church in Mexico," Journal of Church and State 13(1971):479-381; Alan M. Kirshner, "Tomás Garrido Canabal and the Mexican Red Shirt Movement" (Ph. D. diss., New York University, 1970), pp. 93-95, 134; Juan de la Roja, Méjico Mártir (El Paso, Texas: Editorial Revista Católica, 1935), p. 25; John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1919-1936 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), pp. 621-622; William Cameron Townsend, Lázaro Cárdenas: Mexican Democrat (Ann Arbor, Michigan: George Wahr Publishing Company, 1952), pp. 103-104; New York Times, 31 December 1934, p. 6; Nathaniel Weyl and Sylvia Weyl, The Reconquest of Mexico: The Years of Lázaro Cárdenas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 161.

³Kirshner, "A setback," pp. 482-484; Comité "asesinados de Coyoacán," Los sangrientos sucesos de Coyoacán (Méjico, n.d.), pp. 6-7; Virginia Prewett, Reportage on Mexico (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1941), p. 155; Weyl, Reconquest of Mexico, p. 161; Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, pp. 622-623; New York Times, 31 December 1934, p. 1; 1 January 1935, p. 18.

Learning of this incident, Cárdenas indicated his distress and pledged punishment of the guilty. Hoping to insure that both sides of the story would be told, the citizens of Coyoacán formed a committee, the Club of the Assassinated. In addition to publicizing the "truth" about the December 30 murders, the organization worked to achieve the prosecution of the guilty Red Shirts and to remove Garrido Canabal from his cabinet post. Although public indignation mounted against his followers, the secretary of agriculture promised to mortgage his wife's house, if necessary, to raise bail for the forty Red Shirts who were formally charged with inciting the Coyoacán riot.⁴

The situation deteriorated early in January when a mob of some three thousand university students demonstrated in protest of the Coyoacán murders. The students marched to the national palace, where orators delivered inflammatory speeches. Then, the demonstrators proceeded to the Red Shirts' headquarters and sacked the building. The Tabascan youths fired into the mob and wounded five students. Confronted with these volatile events, the president acted. Although convinced that the clergy were responsible for the Coyoacán incident, he realized the

⁴ Kirshner, "A Setback," pp. 485, 487; New York Times, 31 December 1934, p. 1; 2 January 1935, p. 52; Comité "asesinados de Coyoacán," Coyoacán, pp. 2-15, *passim*.

the need to restrain the overly zealous Red Shirts. In a statement on January 8, Cárdenas accused clerical forces of uniting conservative groups in Mexico and transforming minor incidents into bloody clashes. Explaining that the government had taken steps to prevent the repetition of the tragic events of the past few days, he announced that henceforth the PNR would control all propagandistic activities and demonstrations. This announcement, coupled with growing public distaste for the excesses of the Red Shirts, effectively curbed the activities of the young Tabascans, some of whom began to leave the capital.⁵

Another issue creating tension in the capital during the early months of Cárdenas' presidency was socialist education. On December 12 in a pastoral the apostolic delegate reminded Mexicans that

we expressly prohibit Catholics from learning[,] teaching or cooperating . . . in the learning or teaching of . . . Socialist Education. We expressly prohibit Catholics from opening or supporting schools in which Socialist teaching is given, or that they attend or send their children. . . .⁶

⁵ Kirshner, "A Setback," pp. 489-490, 492; La Palabra Nacionalista (Mexico City), 3 January 1935; 8 January 1935; 9 January 1935; Kirshner, "Mexican Red Shirt Movement," pp. 116-118, 121.

⁶ Charles S. MacFarland, Chaos in Mexico: The Conflict of Church and State (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1935), p. 133; Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores to the episcopate, clergy, and Catholics of Mexico, 12 December 1934,

The new secretary of education answered this pastoral, which he claimed attacked national sovereignty in Mexico. Accusing the Catholic clergy of lacking necessary respect for the constitutional regime in Mexico, he denounced their propagandistic effort to encourage opposition to education based on socialism. He labeled Catholic priests as social parasites who opposed revolutionary, pedagogical reforms because they would make the "sombras del obscurantismo" disappear from Mexico. The secretary insisted that socialist instruction would be established in the schools during the coming year.⁷

On January 15, 1935, all primary and secondary schools in the capital observed special ceremonies in which students swore allegiance to the Mexican flag and listened to readings of the amendment to Article III. That same day García Téllez and other functionaries of the Department of Education visited schools in the Federal District, explained socialist education to the students and teachers, and discussed various pedagogical plans of the government.

reel #1, Archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as LA followed by microfilm reel number).

⁷ Alberto Bremauntz, La educación socialista en México: Antecedentes y fundamentos de la reforma de 1934 (México: Imprenta "Rivadeneyra," 1943), pp. 325-326; La Palabra Nacionalista, 20 December 1934.

Many parents in the capital reacted negatively to the activities of the Secretary of Education. Intensifying their propagandistic efforts, the LNDL, the ACJM, the UNPF, and the UNPLE proposed a united front of student strikes to paralyze the Mexican educational system if socialism were implanted in the schools.⁸

Strong resistance to socialist education was also evident in other parts of Mexico. Parents in Jalisco, Colima, Querétaro, Coahuila, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, and Durango kept their children from attending schools suspected of espousing socialism. In Durango indignant Catholics reportedly kidnapped teachers willing to impart socialist doctrines. Through fear, ignorance, and misunderstanding this type of action spread during coming months and years with teachers, particularly those in rural areas, being beaten, abducted, mutilated, and murdered.⁹

⁸ La Palabra Nacionalista, 15 January 1935; 16 January 1935; 18 January 1935.

⁹ La Palabra Nacionalista, 24 December 1934; 2 January 1935; 19 January 1935; 22 January 1935; 30 January 1935; 31 January 1935; New York Times, 4 December 1934; p. 14; 22 January 1935, p. 5; Bremauntz, La educación socialista, pp. 328-329; Townsend, Lázaro Cárdenas, p. 13⁴; Wayne A. Cornelius, "Nation Building, Participation and Distribution: The Politics of Social Reform under Cárdenas," in Gabriel A. Almond et al., eds. Crisis, Choice, and Change: Historical Studies of Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), p. 432. For a study of the number of attacks upon teachers in Mexico in the 1930's and an analysis of the motives behind these acts of violence, see David L. Raby, "Los maestros rurales y los conflictos sociales en México (1931-1940)," Historia Mexicana 18(1968): 190-226.

Cognizant of the upheaval in Mexico, the PNR bloc in the Chamber of Deputies decided that unfounded rumors and baseless fears were largely responsible for the popular agitation surrounding socialist education. Realizing that violence begets violence, the deputies questioned the validity of such methods in suppressing the opposition. Consequently, on January 21, 1935, Mexican congressmen in a move toward moderation decided to initiate a propaganda campaign to explain the purposes of socialist instruction to the populace. They insisted that this campaign should be a peaceful one "without harming or trying to offend the religious beliefs of the people."¹⁰

Churchmen, however, felt that socialist education by its very nature was anti-religious and offensive to the beliefs of the people. On January 21 Archbishop Pascual Díaz y Barreto declared that no Catholic could be a member of the PNR on penalty of excommunication and instructed civil servants to forfeit their jobs rather than actively support the government. He also instructed public employees not to sign any document that required them to deny their religion or manifest hostility to the Roman Catholic Church or consent to the furtherance of socialist education.¹¹

¹⁰Norms, Pascual Díaz to the archdiocesis, 21 January 1935, in New York Times, 22 January 1935, p. 5; La Palabra Nacionalista, 21 January 1935.

¹¹New York Times, 22 January 1935, p. 5; La Palabra Nacionalista, 21 January 1935.

Shortly after the archbishop of Mexico issued the above instructions, Cárdenas told newspapermen of his feelings on the religious controversy. He declared that the actions of the Church during the colonial period had retarded the social and economic evolution of the Mexican nation. Charging that churchmen had worked consistently throughout Mexican history to maintain their position as a privileged class, he explained that they had used their control of education to perpetuate a system of exploitation of the people. Therefore, the president insisted that

the conflict between church and civil power has had but one meaning for the government--the absolute submission of the clergy to the laws as a means to put a stop to their collective or personal interference in political, legal, economic, and social fields.¹²

He contended that his administration desired not persecution of religion but execution of the law.

On January 26 Archbishop Díaz refuted the president's declaration. The prelate insisted that clergymen had not interfered in governmental affairs since "the separation of church and state became a fact in the middle of the last century." Insisting that certain provisions of the Constitution of 1917 were obviously anti-religious, he charged that "Persecution does exist." Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores

¹² Lázaro Cárdenas to the press, in New York Times, 26 January 1935, p. 14; La Palabra Nacionalista, 26 January 1935.

in a similar statement said that the Church had always promoted the social and economic welfare of the Mexican people and cited his own exile as evidence of the State's persecutory attitude toward churchmen.¹³

The irony of the Church-State impasse did not escape Josephus Daniels, the U. S. ambassador to Mexico. Daniels, who had been serving in this diplomatic post since 1933, realized the PNR leadership credited the clergy with active involvement in politics and a desire to overthrow the government. Revolutionaries believed that they must indoctrinate Mexican youth with the principles of the Revolution or the Church would teach them to accept the old order of conservative control. This helped to explain the State's emphasis on socialist instruction in the schools. On the other hand, the ambassador knew that the hierarchy was convinced that the Mexican government persecuted the Church and sought to impose atheistic, communistic education in Mexico. Unwilling to allow this to happen, clergymen resisted revolutionary plans and exhorted lay Catholics to do the same. The real tragedy of this situation, the diplomat

¹³ New York Times, 27 January 1936, p. 24; Lyle C. Brown, "Mexico Church-State Relations, 1933-40," Journal of Church and State 6(1964):210; Open letter, apostolic delegate to Lázaro Cárdenas, 2 February 1935, LA:37; A copy of the open letter sent to Cárdenas by Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores may also be found in fondo XV, "Conflict religioso, 1930-1937," carpeta 2, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Departamento Cultural de Conducex, S.A., México, D.F. (hereafter cited as CEHM).

recognized, was that members of both factions were sincerely committed to their contradictory beliefs.¹⁴

Cárdenas, consistent with his own beliefs, decided that it was incongruous for the Mexican postal system to be used by conservative elements to transmit materials that attacked the government or opposed revolutionary projects.

In conjunction with Secretary Rudolfo Elías Calles, he issued in February a decree amending the Law on General Means of Communications. The measure forbade the circulation by mail of publications, correspondence, or any printed matter that contained religious propaganda or sentiments offensive to the State. By imposing censorship on the Mexican mails, the president hoped to lessen the impact of conservative opposition to government policies.¹⁵

Just as Cárdenas tried to counteract Catholic opposition to his administration, the Church attempted to counteract the government's alleged desire to impose atheism on Mexico. In February the apostolic delegate announced a

¹⁴ Charles W. Hackett, "Mexico and Central America," Current History 38(1933):343 (hereafter cited as CH); Josephus Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), p. 189.

¹⁵ Albert Louis Michaels, "Mexican Politics and Nationalism from Calles to Cárdenas" (Ph. D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1966), p. 152; La Palabra Nacionalista, 13 February 1935. Strong opposition to this measure, particularly on the part of the press, led to its eventual repeal (Alberto María Carreño, Páginas de historia mexicana: (Pages of Mexican History, Colección de Obras Diversas vol. 3 (México, Ediciones Victoria, 1936), p. 247).

program of spiritual renovation for Mexican Catholics. He reminded the faithful that they should love God the Father with all their hearts and that they should respect, obey, and defend the pope, prelates, and priests. He presented specific instructions for the practicing of Catholicism under the difficult circumstances which existed in Mexico. He told laymen in towns with active priests and open churches to attend masses on Sundays and holidays. In areas with clergymen but no open temples, religious ceremonies were to be held in private homes each Sunday. Where open churches were found but no priests were in residence, the faithful were to attend church on Sunday and offer their prayers. Catholics in areas with no clergy or open houses of worship were to observe their religious obligations as best they could in the privacy of their homes. Ruiz y Flores also instructed laymen on how to proceed in administering the rites of baptism, matrimony, and extreme unction in the absence of a priest. Beside sponsoring this program of spiritual renovation, the apostolic delegate again warned parents in March against sending their children to socialist schools and encouraged Catholics to defend their rights through peaceful means.¹⁶

¹⁶ Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, "Programa nacional de renovación espiritual," 11 February 1935, LA:37; Special instructions, Leopoldo Ruiz, apostolic delegate, 19 March 1935, CEHM, fondo XV, carpeta 2.

During the same month that the apostolic delegate encouraged Catholics to defend their rights, an incident occurred in which the archbishop of Mexico felt that his rights were violated. On March 7 Díaz y Barreto officiated at religious ceremonies at la Visitación Church in the state of Mexico. When the prelate and four priests were returning to the capital later that day, they were arrested along with their chauffeur. The arresting officers declared that the clergymen had illegally worn their ministerial robes in public, and that the archbishop was authorized to perform his duties only in the national cathedral in Mexico City. Díaz and his party were detained in jail overnight. To obtain his release and that of his companions, the prelate on the following day admitted his guilt. However, immediately upon obtaining his freedom, he repudiated the confession. He insisted that neither he nor his associates had appeared outside of the church building in clerical garb, and that by virtue of having registered with the civil authorities he could officiate anywhere in Mexico.¹⁷

In an angry letter to the president, Archbishop Diaz denounced the violation of his constitutional rights. He

¹⁷ New York Times, 8 March 1935, p. 1; 9 March 1935, p. 1, 4; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," p. 153; Brown, "Church-State Relations, p. 211.

insisted that after protesting Mexico's laws he had always tried to submit to them and charged that the Department of Gobernación had had no authority to make arrests in the state of Mexico. Complaining that he and his associates had been detained in their car for over five hours and then taken to jail, Díaz asked what crime his chauffeur had committed to justify his being held in custody. The prelate specifically requested that if in the future he were suspected of legal transgressions, he and anyone in his company receive due process of law. In response to this letter, the department of gobernación simply issued a statement explaining that the archbishop had been arrested for violating the law and that he had admitted his guilt.¹⁸

In March Cárdenas signed the enabling legislation to implement the amendment to Article III. Defending his action, he explained that government officials were obligated to implement the Revolution's educational plans. For the remainder of his presidency, Cárdenas proved that he took this obligation seriously. He used the education ministry to further his own social revolution and attempted to make the school, rather than the church, the center of the Mexican community. Adhering to the Six Year Plan, the

¹⁸ Pascual Díaz to Lázaro Cárdenas, 9 March 1935, in Alberto María Carreño, ed., Pastorales, edictos y otros documentos del exmo. y rvmo. sr. dr. d. Pascual Díaz, arzobispo de México (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1938), pp. 366-373; New York Times, 9 March 1935, p. 7.

president increased allotments for educational expenditures, opened new schools, hired more teachers, and subjected textbooks to State inspection. As a result of Cárdenas' efforts, the previously ambiguous socialist education began to assume form and meaning. Designed to imbue students with a "spirit of cooperation rather than one of individualism," socialist schools stressed understanding of the workers' condition, the vices of bourgeois society, and the need for a more equitable social system.¹⁹

Cárdenas' commitment to socialist education and other revolutionary programs antagonized the LNDL. On the occasion of its tenth anniversary, the organization in a manifesto declared its intention to make war without quarter on the "farsantes revolucionarios," the false socialists, who wanted to convert Mexico into a colony of Soviet Russia. Labeling itself an organ of combat which represented Mexicans of all classes and ages, the League asserted that it would continue to the end its fight to reconquer lost liberties

¹⁹ J. H. Plenn, Mexico Marches (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1939), p. 168; New York Times, 22 March 1935, p. 14; Louis Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 118-119, 124, 144; Howard F. Cline, The United States and Mexico, rev. ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1963), pp. 224-225; Townshend, Lázaro Cárdenas, pp. 81-82; Josefina Z. Vázquez Knauth, "La educación socialista de los años treinta," Historia Mexicana 18(1969); 418.

in Mexico.²⁰

While counseling passive Catholic resistance to revolutionary programs, Ruiz y Flores wanted to assure that Mexicans, including members of the LNDL, worked within the bounds prescribed by the papacy. He feared that the Mexican clergy and laity might be confused by the multiplicity of pastorals and messages that he had issued in the past few years. Therefore, he decided to incorporate into one volume his and the pope's instructions to priests, directors of Catholic Action, heads of pious organizations, educators, parents, and other Catholics. He intended the book to provide the faithful with a single reference source to answer their questions on official Church policy and to guide their behavior in the face of the Mexican religious crisis.²¹

In this same vein Ruiz y Flores on April 28 issued special instructions to coordinate the activities of the Episcopal Committee.²² He called attention to the fact that a majority of the prelates had agreed to adhere to the following norms: (1) to encourage Catholic Action (2) to

²⁰Manifesto, LNDL to the Mexican Nation, May, 1935, LA:41.

²¹See introduction to [Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores], Orientaciones y normas dadas por la Santa Sede y por el excmo. y rvmo. sr. delegado apostólico, special ed., (San Antonio, Texas: Imprenta Mundial, 1935).

²²The Episcopal Committee had been resurrected after Pius XI in January of 1932 had stressed the need for unity among the prelates in Mexico.

allow the faithful to work freely within the civic arena unless they strayed from Catholic dogma, (3) to refrain from aiding or hindering armed movements, and (4) to avoid making individual public declarations. Ruiz y Flores stressed the importance of familiarizing each priest and layman in Mexico with these norms and of convincing Mexican Catholics that no division of opinion existed among members of the upper clergy. The apostolic delegate hoped that Catholic churchmen and their parishioners by acting in unity and adhering to the wishes of the papacy could prove a strong opponent for the Cárdenas administration.²³

Despite rising tension, the religious controversy in Mexico was temporarily overshadowed in 1935 by a political crisis in which Calles challenged the authority of the president. As early as April, Cárdenas noted that Callistas, whom he believed to be fearful of losing their lucrative positions, were waging an intense campaign against his government. He knew that these malcontents frequently visited the Sonoran political boss, who was highly critical of the policies of the incumbent administration. Then, on July 11 in an interview with Ezequiel Padilla the Jefe Máximo attacked the radicalism of the Cárdenas government and deplored an alleged presidential attempt to divide Congress into Callistas and Cardenistas. Noting that

²³ Criterio, 22 September 1935, LA:36.

similar circumstances had resulted in the resignation of Pascual Ortiz Rubio, the Sonoran implied that the same thing might happen to the current executive if he did not watch his step.²⁴

Cárdenas lost no time proving that he was not another Ortiz Rubio. At the president's request, the entire cabinet which had strong ties with the Jefe Máximo resigned. The majority blocs in both the Chamber and the Senate indicated their allegiance to the executive in his power struggle with the Sonoran political boss. Portes Gil, newly elected president of the PNR, declared that he would "second the policies of the president." Having received such strong support, Cárdenas resisted the power play by Calles, who announced on June 17 that he was retiring from Mexican political life. He explained that he was taking this step so that no one could mininterpret his recent declarations on political and economic matters to mean that he wanted to interfere in public affairs. The Jefe Máximo soon left Mexico for the United States.²⁵

²⁴ Lázaro Cárdenas, Obras (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1972), vol. I, Apuntes, 1913-1940, pp. 317-320; New York Times, 13 June 1935, p. 1.

²⁵ Cárdenas, Obras, 1:321; New York Times, 15 June 1935, p. 1; 16 June 1935, p. 3; 17 June 1935, p. 1; Weyl, Reconquest of Mexico, pp. 163-164; Hubert Herring, Latin America from the Beginnings to the Present, 3d ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 360; Cornelius, "Nation Building," pp. 445-446.

Churchmen and laymen speculated on the effect of Calles' retirement on religious affairs in Mexico. Some people hoped that Cárdenas, released from the influence of the anticlerical Sonoran, would act in a more moderate and reasonable manner toward the Roman Catholic Church. Early signs seemed to indicate that the president might indeed be tempering his religious policies. He replaced Tomás Garrido Canabal as secretary of agriculture with Saturnino Cedillo of San Luis Potosí. While the Tabascan had been a notorious enemy of the Church, Cedillo was a known protector of religious rights and a Catholic sympathizer. Cárdenas also proclaimed amnesty for Mexicans exiled for religious or political reasons. These presidential actions, coupled with unofficial press reports of a change in the State's attitude toward the Church, reinforced the hopes of Catholics that they and their faith were going to receive better treatment in the future. On July 7 the faithful prayed in all open churches for religious liberty. On that day Archbishop Díaz issued a plea for peace and asked the government to soften its restrictions on the Roman Catholic Church.²⁶

²⁶ Hubert Herring, "Mexico," CH 42(1935):526, 638; Townsend, Lázaro Cárdenas, p. 105-106, 117; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 68-69, 155; New York Times, 1 July 1935, p. 1; 8 July 1935, p. 7. The resignation of Tomás Garrido Canabal from the cabinet encouraged the Tabascan's political opponents to try to end his rule in his home state. By August, 1935, Garrido Canabal's hold over

Cárdenas soon revealed, however, that press reports were overly optimistic and that he had appointed Cedillo and pardoned exiles primarily for political reasons. The president intended to insist that the clergy and their adherents obey Mexican laws and to continue his emphasis on socialist education. In a meeting with his new cabinet on July 2, the executive announced that his administration would enforce laws pertaining to religion. And, in his diary the president wrote that the clergy hoped to take advantage of the political crisis to obtain new governmental concessions over and above those granted by Portes Gil in 1929. Dismissing this possibility, he restated his aim of using the schools to free the Mexican people from the fanaticism that kept them in misery and ignorance.²⁷

One particular incident illustrated the president's position on the religious question. Undertaking a tour of Mexico during the summer of 1935, the executive visited Colima in July. While he was there some one hundred women, angered by alleged violations of their religious rights, participated in a riotous demonstration and demanded that

Tabasco was broken and he left the state permanently (Kirshner, "The Mexican Red Shirt Movement," pp. 201-247, *passim*; Weyl, Reconquest of Mexico, pp. 164-166).

²⁷Kirshner, "Mexican Red Shirt Movement," p. 158; New York Times, 3 July 1935, p. 3; Cárdenas, Obras, 1:324.

Cárdenas make a statement on the rights of the Church.

The president received a delegation of the women in his private railroad car and listened to their major complaint that no priests were allowed to officiate in Colima. He agreed to discuss the matter with Governor Salvador Saucedo and subsequently arranged for the governor to hold an open meeting on the religious issue. At this open forum, Saucedo declared that the state government could not act on the matter of clerical limitations until after state elections were held in October. Discussing the Coliman situation with a newspaperman, Cárdenas noted that many political and religious opinions coexisted in Mexico and that everyone should be able to express their views. However, he explained that the regulation of clerical numbers was the prerogative of state legislatures and that he could not interfere in matters of state sovereignty.²⁸ Thus, although the president was willing to listen to the people's complaints and to encourage other officials to do the same, he had no intention of changing or interfering with existing laws.

Further evidence that Cárdenas intended to maintain a strict attitude on Church-State affairs was provided when he signed in August a Ley de Nacionalización de Bienes. This measure declared that bishops' residences, seminaries,

²⁸ Herring, "Mexico," CH 42(1935):636, 638; New York Times, 26 July 1935, p.10.

schools belonging to religious associations, convents, temples used at any time since 1914 for purposes of public worship, and other religious properties belonged to the nation. It defined temples as any buildings open for public worship with the authorization of the government and any used habitually with the owner's knowledge for religious acts. Also subject to nationalization under the terms of the law were buildings used for purposes of administering a religious sect or imparting a religious creed. The president explained that this Ley de Nacionalización de Bienes was designed to place in the custody of the State properties directly or indirectly controlled by the clergy.²⁹

Confronted with this evidence that the president planned to follow a hard line on religious affairs, the episcopate acted. On September 18 the prelates in a collective pastoral declared that the clergy and laity would cooperate with the government in everything that was just and moral but that they would not cooperate in projects that offended God and violated the inalienable rights of

²⁹ Diario Oficial (Mexico City), 31 August 1935; 4 September 1935; [Lázaro Cárdenas], Informe que rinde al h. congreso de la unión el c. Presidente Lázaro Cárdenas, sobre su gestión de septiembre de 1936 a agosto de 1937 (México: DAPP, 1937), p. 12. In the report to Congress cited in this footnote Cárdenas declared that three hundred religious buildings had been nationalized under the terms of the Ley de Nacionalización and converted to other uses.

the Church. The hierarchy asked the faithful to form a united front of passive resistance, to work for the repeal of persecutory legislation, to publicize Catholic propaganda, and to adhere to the apostolic delegate's program of spiritual renovation for Mexico.³⁰

Besides appealing to Mexican Catholics, the episcopate in mid-October directed a memorial to the president. They explained that they were using the right of petition to solicit the repeal of the Ley de Nacionalización de Bienes. They also asked Cárdenas to sponsor before Congress the reform of constitutional Articles 3, 24, 27, and 130. Claiming that religion could not be taught adequately in the churches because in many states no churches were open, the prelates declared that the amendment to Article III was notoriously anti-religious. While explaining that they were not opposed to social justice or the welfare of the proletariat, the churchmen insisted that they could not condone socialism because it was saturated with hatred for God. They assured the president that their petition was motivated not by an attitude of rebellion, but by a sincere desire to defend the Church's sacred rights.³¹

³⁰ Mexican episcopate to Mexican Catholics, 8 September 1935, LA:37.

³¹ Petition, Mexican episcopate to the president of the Republic, 29 September 1935, LA:37.

Cárdenas' reply to this petition offered no hope to the Church. The president denounced the clergy for demanding liberty for themselves while denying it to others, blamed Catholic dogma for obstructing scientific investigation, warned that the government would not allow attacks upon Mexican political institutions, and defended socialist education. He explained that the State had been forced to choose between teaching the creeds of all religions in the schools or teaching none at all. The government had chosen the latter. The president insisted that laws pertaining to religion and education would be rigidly enforced but declared that the program of his administration was not anti-religious. He contended that Catholicism should be practiced and taught in the homes and in the churches.³²

Refusing to allow the president the final word on the matter the episcopate on November 23 addressed a second memorial to him. The prelates explained that they felt obligated to analyze Cárdenas' reply to their earlier petition. They charged that the teaching of religion was actually prohibited in Mexican schools not because the government wished to insure religious liberty, but because Marxist doctrines viewed religion as an evil to be destroyed. The churchmen complained that a tenacious anti-Catholic

³²Brown, "Church-State Relations," p. 212; Hubert Herring, "Mexico," CH 43(1935):305; New York Times, 6 November 1935, p. 10.

campaign was underway in Mexico and that religious persecution was rampant in the country. They reminded Cárdenas that they had petitioned within legal terms for the derogation of objectionable laws but had received no relief. Therefore, the members of the hierarchy ratified their earlier appeal that the president return closed churches to Catholics, reform Mexico's laws on religion, convince state legislatures to modify unreasonable limitation laws, and prohibit the secretary of education and other government officials from undertaking anti-religious campaigns. To the distress of the hierarchy, this second petition was no more successful than the first.³³ The Church and State remained at odds as 1935 neared an end.

Militant Catholics were also still at odds with the State. By late 1935 some 6,000 to 7,500 men in 14 states had declared war upon the Mexican government. Many of the insurgents subscribed to the Plan of Cerro Gordo and considered themselves to be part of the Popular Liberator Army, but others maintained their autonomy. The resistance movement suffered from four basic handicaps: (1) disunity among the participants, (2) lack of effective centralized leadership, (3) scarcity of military supplies, and (4) hierachial refusal to endorse the rebellion. These

³³ New petition, Mexican episcopate to president of the Republic, 23 November 1935, LA:38; New York Times, 21 January 1936, p. 1.

handicaps to a greater or lesser degree hampered the second Cristero insurrection from its inception to its termination.³⁴

The LNDL, which kept abreast of the Cristeros' progress and published military bulletins, recognized the weaknesses of the armed movement. On December 5 the Catholic organization called attention to the lack of unity and organization among the rebels in Mexico. After asserting that it had no desire to head or coordinate the rebellion, the League asked all the insurgents to adopt the Plan of Cerro Gordo and select a "Jefe de prestigio." Should the resistance movement succeed in overthrowing the present government, the Cristeros' supreme chief would become president of Mexico and organize the country along the lines specified in the Cerro Gordo manifesto. A national assembly, representing churches and other important groups in Mexico, would consult with the president and develop "bases constitutivas" for the nation. Then, the League explained, a popular referendum would be held to ratify the results of the assembly's efforts.³⁵

³⁴ Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, trans. Aurelio Garzón del Camino, 2d ed. (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1974), vol. 1, La guerra de los Cristeros, pp. 363, 371, 369, 375, 381; Memorandum, 19 April 1936, LA:36; Desde Mexico, 1 November 1935, LA:38; Reconquista (Mexico City), 1 September 1935; Manifesto, Porfirio Loza to the people of Querétaro, 5 December 1935, LA:40; Memorandum, LNDL, 5 December 1935, LA:38.

³⁵ Memorandum, LNDL, 5 December 1935, LA:38.

Like the LNDL, some Cristeros recognized the need for a figure to head the resistance movement. A segment of the rebels in 1935 consequently accepted José Vasconcelos, a former secretary of education who had run for the presidency in 1929, as the only legitimate authority in Mexico. A man who for years had claimed that he had been cheated of the presidency, Vasconcelos agreed to adopt the Plan of Cerro Gordo in return for the support of its subscribers. Even with Vasconcelos as a figurehead for some of its participants, however, the second Cristero movement had no real hope of success against the superior forces and resources of the State, although it did prove a thorn in the side of the Cárdenas administration.³⁶

One of the major targets of the Cristeros and other conservative elements was the rural schoolteacher, who not only promoted revolutionary pedagogical projects but also often endorsed agrarian reform and challenged the authority of local politicians. Opposition to the activities of educators and to socialist education resulted in violent attacks upon teaching personnel and bombings of school buildings. Reacting to this situation, an agrarian congress, meeting in Morelos in October, 1935, demanded that the State take steps to protect the lives of teachers. After

³⁶ Miscellaneous document, 1935, LA:37; Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:367-368.

promising to refer the matter to the minister of war and the president, Emilio Portes Gil told the delegates that the government's policies were not antagonistic to religion but opposed clerical groups that sought to exploit the Mexican people. A reported twelve assassinations in one month led the secretary of education in November to ask the Department of War to allow schoolteachers to arm in self defense. In December thousands of alarmed educators paraded in the capital and demanded guarantees of safety. Cárdenas told the teachers that they were the hope of the Revolution and promised them protection from landlords, clergy, and other violent groups. He agreed to let them carry arms.³⁷

Adding to the president's concerns, Calles returned to Mexico from the United States on December 13. The Sonoran insisted that he had intended to stay out of Mexican politics after his exit from the country in June. However, he explained that the "storm of insults and calumnies" unleashed against him during his absence had caused him to change his mind. The political boss claimed and

³⁷ Raby, "Los maestros rurales," p. 192; David L. Raby, Educación y revolución social en México (1921-1940), trans. Roberto Gómez Ciriza, Sep Setentas, vol. 141 (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1974), pp. 95-240, *passim*; New York Times, 7 October 1935, p. 34; 18 November 1935, p. 10; 22 November 1935, p. 15; 6 December 1935, p. 16; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," p. 131.

accepted full responsibility for the acts of the Mexican government while he was president and for the religious conflict of that period. He expressed confidence that, while in office, he had properly interpreted the desires of the revolutionaries who had carried him into power.³⁸ Calles' return to Mexico and these remarks indicated that the Jefe Máximo still considered himself an active participant in Mexican politics.

Workers in various states demonstrated against Calles' return to Mexico and demanded his expulsion from the country. The Sonoran insisted that he had not returned to his homeland to undertake seditious activities. Nevertheless, Cárdenas believed that the Jefe Máximo and his partisans were engaged in a subversive campaign to undermine the incumbent administration. The president's fears were reinforced when Calles in mid-December told the press that the Mexican government supported demagogic action, that Mexico was heading for disaster, and that labor organizations were disrupting the country. Cárdenas viewed Calles' attitude as a betrayal of the Revolution and suspected that he hoped to impress and win support from the United States. Despite demands for expulsion and his own personal feelings, the president took no steps to remove

³⁸ Cárdenas, Obras, 1:331; Herring, "Mexico," CH 43 (1936):527; New York Times, 14 December 1935, p. 6.

the political boss from Mexico. Cárdenas decided that Calles and his followers did not constitute a real threat to the government and that they should remain in Mexico "to feel the weight of their historical responsibility."³⁹

In addition to his many domestic problems, Cárdenas had to concern himself with public opinion in the United States; for, the religious upheaval in Mexico had been a subject of interest to many Americans in 1935. During that year members of Congress had discussed the Mexican crisis, and Senator William Borah had even proposed a formal investigation into the matter. The Knights of Columbus had asked President Franklin Roosevelt to intervene on behalf of oppressed Mexican Catholics, but he had repeatedly asserted that his administration would not interfere in the domestic concerns of another nation. Additionally, the American Committee on Religious Rights and Minorities had sent a three-man, non-sectarian commission to Mexico to evaluate the situation there. The commission's report, which was completed late in 1935, stated that the Mexican government denied religious liberty to the people and that religious persecution did exist in Mexico. It also declared that Mexican revolutionaries were trying to abolish religion in a manner identical with that employed by the

³⁹ Cárdenas, Obras, 1:332-333; Cornelis, "Nation Building," p. 453.

Soviet Union. This report strengthened already existing public disapproval of the treatment accorded the Roman Catholic Church and its parishioners in Mexico.⁴⁰ Thus, even though Cárdenas did not have to fear official intervention by Mexico's northern neighbor, he knew that the religious policies of his administration were under severe criticism in the United States by the end of 1935.

At the end of his first year in office, then, Cárdenas faced serious problems, some of which were of long standing origin. Government officials and private citizens in the U. S. criticized the religious policies of the Mexican State. Catholic prelates decried persecutory legislation, demanded constitutional reform, denounced socialist education, and encouraged laymen to resist revolutionary reforms by legal means. Distressed parents refused to send their children to socialist schools. Teachers were the object of violent, often fatal attacks committed by conservative elements. Cristeros were as determined as ever to overthrow the existing regime. And, Calles, although allegedly retired from political life, was a vocal opponent of the Cárdenas administration. Concerned that so much of his time and energy were being occupied by these problems which were distracting him from

⁴⁰ New York Times, 17 February 1935, p. 27; 28 November 1935, pp. 1, 10; 2 February 1936, pp. 1, 6; Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat, pp. 191-193; Desde México, 3 December 1935, LA:41; Wilfrid Parsons, Mexican Martyrdom (New York: MacMillan Company, 1936), p. 272.

fulfilling the Six Year Plan, the president began to consider means of resolving his religious, educational, and political difficulties.

CHAPTER XI

RECONCILIATION

In a message to the Mexican people on January 1, 1936, Lázaro Cárdenas discussed the accomplishments of his administration during the previous year. He announced that his government had promoted education throughout the Republic in accord with the Six Year Plan and the amendment to Article III and that two thousand new schools had been established. Despite the resistance to socialist education early in the year, the president assured that student attendance in Mexico had been satisfactory. He insisted that the Mexican people had realized that the "program approved by the government . . . tends to create a healthy and active youth who by their character, decision, and love of country, proceed to make an end of egotisms and to impel new fountains of work for the profit of the nation."¹ After discussing the progress of Mexico in education and other fields, Cárdenas asked his constituents to dedicate their energies to constructive labor during

¹ Report, Lázaro Cárdenas to the people, 1 January 1936, in Lázaro Cárdenas, Realización del plan sexenal, 1935-1936, Publicaciones oficiales de la secretaría particular de la presidencia de la república, No. 1, (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1936), pp. 32-33.

the coming year. He stressed the need for common solidarity and the importance of achieving a higher standard of living in Mexico.²

Not all Mexicans reacted favorably to the government's educational accomplishments or to Cárdenas' plea for solidarity. In a collective pastoral on January 16, 1936, the episcopate repeated their admonitions against revolutionary educational programs. Catholics were again instructed not to become socialists, to cooperate in the learning or teaching of socialist courses, or to send their children to schools imparting socialistic doctrines. Although they acknowledged that no layman had been excommunicated for violating these precepts, the prelates warned that Catholics committed a grave sin if they disobeyed the Church's dictates. While complaining that years of laic instruction and public secularity had produced a Mexican generation indifferent to religion, the bishops insisted that the Church could again transform Mexico into a religious country, if sincere and dedicated Catholics would fulfill their duties.³

Like Mexican churchmen, American prelates were

²Ibid., p. 77.

³Mexican episcopate to the clergy and faithful, 16 January 1936, in New York Times, 17 January 1936, pp. 1, 7.

interested in insuring that Mexico remained a Catholic country. Early in 1936 a Catholic Bishops' Commission Incorporated for Mexican Relief was founded in the United States. Formed with papal approval and headed by Archbishop Michael J. Curley of Maryland, this commission proposed to do the following: (1) lend support to Roman Catholic seminaries and colleges, (2) promote Christian education in Mexico, (3) assist Mexicans in obtaining religious freedom and rights of conscience, and (4) solicit contributions for the Church and faithful in Mexico. The American bishops involved in this project noted that for years they had objected to religious persecution in Mexico and that they were finally taking action to help ⁴ their Mexican brethren.

Cárdenas knew that American public opinion, lay as well as clerical, censured the abuse of religious rights and lack of religious freedom in Mexico. He was also cognizant that opposition of Mexican churchmen to the religious provisions of the Constitution of 1917, to stringent state laws, and to revolutionary educational plans had remained strong over the years. Furthermore, he realized that the ongoing Cristero movement was intricately related to Church-State difficulties in Mexico.

⁴ New York Times, 2 February 1936, pp. 1, 6.

Accordingly, after much thought the president concluded that religious issues occupied too much of the nation's time, energy, and resources. Hoping to lessen tension within his own country, to promote solidarity among the Mexican people, and to improve Mexico's image in the United States, Cárdenas made a conscious decision to moderate his administration's position with regard to the Roman Catholic Church.⁵

While speaking at Ciudad Guerrero, Tamaulipas, in February, 1936, Cárdenas made overtures toward the Church. Distinguishing between religious beliefs and fanaticism, he assured "that it is not an attribute of this government . . . to combat . . . any religion." He explained that socialist instruction combatted fanaticism, familiarized the child with his duties toward the community, and prepared him to participate in the social struggle. Besides decrying the enemies of socialist education, the president labeled as liars people who claimed

⁵ Albert Louis Michaels, "Mexican Politics and Nationalism from Calles to Cárdenas" (Ph. D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1966), pp. 149; 176; Wayne A. Cornelius, "Nation Building, Production and Distribution: The Politics of Social Reform under Cárdenas," in Gabriel A. Almond et al., eds., Crisis, Choice, and Change: Historical Studies of Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), pp. 421-422; Nathaniel Weyl and Sylvia Weyl, The Reconquest of Mexico: The Years of Lázaro Cárdenas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 169; L. Vincent Padgett, The Mexican Political System (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), p. 35.

that religious persecution existed in Mexico. He stressed that his government sought only "fulfillment of the laws."⁶

In the following month, the Mexican chief of state offered an explanation for his decision to modify approaches toward the Church. Speaking to teachers at a Congreso de Unificación Campesino in Guadalajara, Jalisco, he exclaimed that his administration's main concern was the promotion of economic and social reform. Contending that anti-religious campaigns inside and outside of the classroom hampered Mexico's progress in this direction and elicited opposition from Catholics, Cárdenas claimed that he would avoid the mistake of earlier presidents who had treated "the religious question as a problem preeminent to other issues." After assuring that Mexican authorities would continue to enforce the laws and protect teachers from attack, he declared that action by organized masses in the fight against fanaticism was the best insurance of the spiritual emancipation of the people.⁷

⁶ Lyle C. Brown, "Mexican Church-State Relations, 1933-1940," Journal of Church and State 6 (1964):213-214; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," p. 160; New York Times, 18 February 1936, p. 5.

⁷ Desde México, 31 March 1926, reel 41, Archive of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as LA followed by reel number); New York Times, 6 March 1936, p. 10; Brown, "Church-State Relations," p. 214; J. H. Plenn, Mexico Marches (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1939), p. 207.

As this speech revealed, Cárdenas acknowledged that churchmen and fanatical Catholics were not the only groups to blame for the long standing religious turmoil in Mexico. During the period of Plutarco Elías Calles' rule, public officials, civil servants, and private citizens had been outspoken in their opposition to the Church. Anti-clericalism had been the keynote of the Calles years. The Catholic faith, along with its priests and practitioners, had come under attack at all levels. Severe measures had been enacted to restrict clerical numbers and close houses of worship, and teachers had often dedicated themselves within the classroom to the task of de-Catholicizing Mexican youth. This state of events had led to a strong reaction on the part of the clergy and devout laity, who were determined to defend and preserve the Roman Catholic religion in Mexico. Cárdenas recognized that a prerequisite to the bettering of Church-State relations and the termination of the second Cristero rebellion was to end the abuse of religious rights in Mexico. By taking steps to conciliate the Church and its worshippers, he hoped to lay religious and related problems to rest and to devote himself to matters of higher priority, i.e., social and economic reform. Thus, he decided to abandon the tactics, if not the gains, of the Calles era.⁸

⁸ Francis Patrick Dooley, "The Cristeros, Calles and Mexican Catholicism," (Ph. D. diss., University of Maryland,

Cárdenas had another, equally significant, reason for extending an olive branch to the Catholic clergy and laity. Since his return from the United States, Calles had criticized the radical aspects of the incumbent administration. The Sonoran was reportedly regrouping his forces in 1936 and awaiting the opportunity to reassert his control over Mexico. Staunch Callistas were known to be agitating against the government. To weaken his opposition, the president purged Calles' supporters from the military, the PNR, labor organizations, and agrarian associations. Additionally, he realized the need to broaden his own base of support and gain the allegiance of as many factions as possible. By turning Calles' anticlericalism against him and conciliating the Church, Cárdenas hoped to gain at least qualified support from Mexican Catholics and their spiritual leaders.⁹

Events in Mexico during March testified to the president's sincere desire to placate the Church. Although

1972), pp. 97-99; Albert L. Michaels, "El nacionalismo conservador mexicano desde la revolución hasta 1940," Historia Mexicana 16(1966):219; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 42, 149, 176; "Vicente Lombardo Toledano, teórico y militante marxista," in James W. Wilkie and Edna Monzón de Wilkie, Méjico visto en el siglo XX: Entrevistas de historia oral (Méjico: Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones Económicas, 1969), pp. 343-344; New York Times, 15 February 1937, p. 16.

⁹Cornelius, "Nation Building," pp. 450, 454; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 149, 176; Howard F. Cline, The United States and Mexico, rev. ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1963), pp. 176, 220.

maintaining an official policy of non-interference in matters of state sovereignty, the Cárdenas administration apprised state governments that it would look favorably upon the relaxation of religious restrictions. Responding to the executive's wishes, Colima, Campeche, Oaxaca, Nuevo León, Sonora, Sinaloa, Guerrero, Nayarit, and Querétaro reopened a number of formerly closed Catholic churches. Then, at the end of the month Secretary of Gobernación Silvano Barba González informed the press that the federal government would not overemphasize the religious problem, provoke the Church, or allow it to be persecuted. If Catholics would obey the law, the secretary promised that their religious rights would be respected.¹⁰

Although attempting to better Church-State relations, Cárdenas acted and spoke forcefully when necessary. In late March Catholics rioted in Ciudad González, Guanajuato. The rioters killed eighteen members of a cultural . . .

¹⁰ Desde México, 31 March 1936, LA:41; Cornelius, "Nation Building," p. 459; Donald E. Worcester and Wendell G. Schaeffer, The Growth and Culture of Latin America, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), vol. 2, The Continuing Struggle for Independence, p. 316; New York Times, 10 March 1936, p. 1; 12 March 1936, p. 15; 19 March 1936, p. 6; 26 March 1936, p. 24; 29 March 1926, part II, p. 7; 30 March 1936, p. 1; 31 March 1936, p. 14; Brown, "Church-State Relations," p. 215.

mission, which was in the town to show the merits of socialist education to the people and to instruct local teachers in methodology. The president immediately proceeded to Ciudad González where he conducted a personal investigation of the incident. Learning that a group of Catholics had met in the local church prior to the attack upon the cultural mission, Cárdenas concluded that the local priests were responsible for the murders. He ordered the two clerics to leave the area within twenty-four hours. Entering the church building, the president spoke from the altar to the campesinos present. Socialist education, he told them, was designed to make Mexicans stronger and more conscious of their social responsibilities. He denied that it attacked religious beliefs or destroyed homes and families.¹¹

By the end of March, 1936, Cárdenas' speeches and actions revealed his new position on religious affairs. As long as he was president, socialist education would be imparted in the schools, but teachers would be expected to

¹¹ Weyl, Reconquest of Mexico, pp. 166-167; New York Times, 1 April 1936, p. 19; William Cameron Townsend, Lázaro Cárdenas: Mexican Democrat (Ann Arbor, Michigan: George Wahr Publishing Company, 1952), pp. 133-134; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 161-162; Brown, "Church-State Relations," pp. 215-216. The speech delivered by Lázaro Cárdenas in Ciudad González on March 31, 1936, may be found in Lázaro Cárdenas, Escuela socialista y religión (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1936).

refrain from attacking the Roman Catholic faith. He would not allow the clergy to intervene in matters outside their sphere, nor would he permit Catholics to block governmental programs. Nevertheless, he was willing to adopt a more moderate approach than that of the Calles dominated administrations toward religion in general and the Roman Catholic Church in particular. His regime would respect religious rights and would encourage state governments to do likewise.

Additional evidence of Cárdenas' goodwill was provided in April. On Palm Sunday at least thirty-nine Catholic Churches were open in the Federal District, although the existing law allowed for only twenty-five. And, more than the legally authorized twenty-five priests were performing their functions. The president was not only aware of the situation, but even visited several of the houses of worship in the capital on that day. Neither he nor any of his subordinates attempted to close the extra churches or to prevent the unregistered clergymen from ministering to the faithful.¹²

Although the president in 1936 endorsed a policy of moderation at the state and national levels, he knew that

¹²Josephus Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), p. 160; New York Times, 6 April 1936, p. 12.

then as in the past considerable hostility to the Church existed among revolutionaries. Officials in some states were reluctant to alter their harsh religious restrictions, and the Cárdeanas administration hesitated to intervene actively to achieve that end. Therefore, not all Mexican Catholics enjoyed improved conditions of worship. An example of this was in the state of Veracruz. After learning of the president's overtures toward the Church, the faithful petitioned Governor Miguel Alemán to reopen churches and register priests. The governor advised the petitioners to address their pleas to the federal government, which they did in a telegram to the president. The secretary of gobernación replied on the executive's behalf that the matter in question was one of local jurisdiction. When Catholics subsequently presented another petition to Alemán, he repeated that they must seek relief from national authorities. Finally, five thousand men and women from Veracruz visited Mexico City in April to seek Cárdenas' assistance. On April 23 their delegates met with the undersecretary of gobernación, who explained that the federal government could not encroach on a matter of state sovereignty. Thus, the faithful in Veracruz found themselves traveling in political circles.¹³

¹³ New York Times, 23 May 1936, sect. IV, p. 8; 11 February 1937, pp. 1, 7; 24 April 1936, p. 11; Brown "Church-State Relations," p. 217; Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat, p. 161; El Universal (Mexico City), 6 May 1934.

During the same month that Catholics from Veracruz visited the national capital to seek redress of their grievances, the final confrontation occurred between the president and the Jefe Máximo. Alarmed by subversive activities engaged in by Callistas, Cárdenas dispatched General Francisco Múgica to inform Calles that the interests of the nation were threatened by his partisans. The military officer told the Sonoran that four men--Luis Monores, Luis León, Rafael Melchor Ortega, and José María Tapia--must leave Mexico because they were conspiring against the government. Calles blatantly replied that he, as well as the four men under discussion, opposed the agrarian and labor policies of the present administration, and that he would accompany his friends if they were exiled. Informed of Calles' position, Cárdenas on April 9 ordered the expulsion of the political boss and his four cohorts. On the following day the president justified his action to newspapermen. He explained that certain Mexican elements had sought to provoke alarm and social unrest in order to disturb the forward march of Mexican institutions and to frustrate the noble ends of the State. Therefore, as president he had acted in the best interests of the nation.¹⁴

Calles' expulsion rid Cárdenas of his most formidable political rival and also rid Mexico of a man who directly or indirectly had dominated the country for more than a decade. Furthermore, it provided Cardenistas with a scapegoat on whom to blame the Church-State difficulties that had plagued Mexico

¹⁴ Lázaro Cárdeans, Obras (México: Universidad Autónoma de México, 1972), vol. 1, Apuntes, 1913-1940, pp. 337-340; New York Times, 11 April 1936, p. 1.

for so many years. Early in May four representatives of the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM) made a good will tour of the United States. During their travels these men declared that religious persecution had ended in Mexico. In a press interview on May 5, Alejandro Carrillo, secretary of the Union of Intellectual Salaried Workers of Mexico, charged that "Calles used the religious problem as a smoke screen to smother the economic demands of the workers." He explained that President Cárdenas, since the exile of his Sonoran opponent, had allowed freedom of religion in Mexico and that many churches had been reopened. Carrillo insisted that any remaining Mexican religious conflicts were local matters.¹⁵

Carrillo's words contained a great deal of truth; for, the Sonoran strongman had been responsible for much of the religious turmoil in Mexico during the Maximato,¹⁶ and the religious scene did improve after his involuntary exile from the country. Upon coming to office in 1924, Calles had been determined to enforce the religious provisions of the Constitution and to subject the church to civil control at all costs. Apparently a sincere anticleric at that time, he had believed these matters to be of top priority. Refusing to be intimated by a clerical

¹⁵New York Times, 5 May 1936, p. 7.

¹⁶The term Maximato refers to the years of Plutarco Elías Calles' rule in Mexico (1924-1935).

withdrawal or a Catholic rebellion, he had demanded obedience to the law. By 1929 the Church had been forced to acknowledge, if not accept, the superiority of the State. Bitter Catholics had grudgingly laid down their arms. However, the modus vivendi had not brought permanent religious peace to Mexico nor religious freedom to the Mexican people.

In the years succeeding the modus vivendi, religious strife and religious persecution abounded in Mexico. Tomás Garrido Canabal, Adalberto Tejeda, and other Callistas initiated some of the harshest measures and most severe laws directed against the Roman Catholic Church and its personnel. Calles personally aggravated the situation with his punitive reaction to the Catholic ceremonies held in 1931 to commemorate the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe and his volatile *grito de Guadalajara* delivered in 1934. Whether Calles contributed to religious turmoil in Mexico in the 1930's for idealistic, pragmatic, or selfish reasons is a moot point. His actions may have been intended to insure that the Church did not regain the ground that it had lost in the previous decade and that its influence on the Mexican people was kept in check. Or, in his growing conservatism and desire to remain in power, the Sonoran may have used the religious issue to impede revolutionary reforms and

weaken the position of Lázaro Cárdenas. In reality, the political boss was probably motivated by a combination of these factors.

That Calles' motives are questionable, however, does not alter the fact that he, probably more than any other individual, was responsible for the subordination of the Church to the State in Mexico. Whether Cárdenas realized it or not, he owed a debt to the former Sonoran strongman. If the president was able to moderate the official religious policy of the government in 1936, it was because the battle against the Church had already been won.¹⁷ Cárdenas could hope to devote his energies to economic and social, rather than religious concerns, because Calles for whatever reason had spent so much of his time in resolving the historic problem of the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico. The Sonoran's methods may have been excessive and the cost of his achievement overly high, but he did fulfill his campaign promise of enforcing the religious provisions of the Constitution of 1917.

During the same month that Alejandro Carrillo assured Americans that religious freedom was finally a reality in Mexico, Pascual Díaz y Barreto died. During the last months of his life, the archbishop had been

¹⁷ Weyl, Reconquest of Mexico, p. 149.

involved in a project to create in the United States a Catholic seminary to train priests for service in Mexico. He had traveled to San Antonio, Texas, in March to discuss the proposition with the exiled apostolic delegate but had fallen ill. He had subsequently returned to Mexico City where he died in May. Existing health and religious regulations forced churchmen to solicit official permission to transfer the archbishop's body to the national cathedral and to have a public burial service. The secretary of gobernación denied both requests. Alberto María Carreño, secretary and friend of the deceased prelate, appealed to members of the diplomatic corps, including Josephus Daniels, to use their offices to influence the secretary. The diplomats agreed. Thanks to their intervention permission was granted for Díaz' body to be taken to the cathedral on the twenty-second and buried the following day. Thousands of Mexicans attended the funeral of this noted churchman, who had been intimately involved in Church-State affairs in Mexico for many years and who was both loved and hated for his role in negotiating the modus vivendi of 1929.¹⁸

Shortly after the death of the archbishop of Mexico, Paul V. Murray, an American serving as a special

¹⁸Alberto María Carreño, Páginas de historia mexicana: (Pages of Mexican History), Colección de obras diversas, vol. 3 (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1936), p. 213;

correspondent for the Washington Post, addressed a letter to the other members of the Mexican episcopate. He asked each prelate to report on the number of churches open within his diocese or archdiocese, the number of priests actually exercising their offices there, and any changes in the religious laws of the various states. Murray received twenty-seven replies, which contain valuable information on religious conditions in Mexico during the late spring and early summer of 1936. By that time a total of more than three hundred priests were officiating in the nation and many times that number of churches were open to the faithful. But, the prelates' replies indicate the hazards in generalizing about religious conditions in Mexico in 1936. Catholics in some states enjoyed religious freedom, while others lacked available clergymen and churches. Indicative of the extremes were Veracruz and San Luis Potosí. Officials in the former refused to register any priests or to allow the faithful the use of any temples. On the other hand, in San Luis Potosí Catholic clergy operated without civil interference and

Alberto María Carreño, El excmo. y rvmo. sr. dr. d. Pascual Díaz y Barreto, arzobispo de México (homenajes póstumos) (México: Ediciones Victoria, 1936), pp. 36-43, 46-49, 103, 109; Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat, pp. 148-150. By 1936 the government had closed all Catholic seminaries in Mexico (Wilfrid Parsons, Mexican Martyrdom (New York: Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 175).

houses of worship were open to the public. Most states fell between these two extremes; for, the harshness of laxity of religious restrictions in a state depended upon the sentiments of its officials. And, men in power in various parts of Mexico held widely differing attitudes toward the Roman Catholic Church, its clergy, and its parishioners.¹⁹

Several events occurring both inside and outside of Mexico in the summer of 1936 did encourage optimism among the faithful. Archbishop Diaz' crucial project of a Mexican seminary in the United States did not die with him. Cardinal Hayes announced that American Catholics would help to establish in New Mexico an institution to train Mexican priests for service in their homeland. The clergy and laity in Mexico were heartened not only by this announcement but also by the fact that several state governments relaxed their restrictions on the number of Catholic churches available to the public. Moreover, the legislature in Querétaro revised an existing law which allowed only five ecclesiastics per sect for the state. The new statute allotted three ministers of each faith for the city of Querétaro and one for every other municipality.

¹⁹Statistical and other conclusions based upon the letters received by Paul V. Murray are those of this author. The letters mentioned in the text are in Murray's personal library at 1500 Corregidores, Mexico 10, D.F. Xerox copies of the letters are in my possession.

A Nayarit decree authorized twenty Catholic clergymen to register, whereas previously only one priest had been allowed to officiate. Although they did not actually modify their clerical limitation measures, officials in several other states exercised leniency toward unregistered churchmen who were actively pursuing their profession.²⁰ Thus, religious freedom in the sense of more open churches and a greater number of active clergymen was on the increase in Mexico in the summer of 1936.

Cárdenas explained the situation to Ambassador Daniels later in the year. Stressing that his government was disposed toward relaxing stringent laws on religion, the president declared that in every state as officials in sympathy with his administration were elected more churches were being opened and the policy of moderation was spreading. The Mexican chief of state claimed to be neither anti or pro-clerical, and insisted that Mexico was not communistic or atheistic. However, he proclaimed that priests must confine themselves to the religious sphere and divorce themselves from politics. Additionally, Cárdenas emphasized the importance of socialist education. Because the Church had failed to educate the people during

²⁰ New York Times, 3 July 1936, p. 1; 17 July 1936, p. 8; 27 July 1936, p. 4; Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat, p. 162; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, trans. Aurelio Garzón del Camino (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1974), vol. 1, La guerra de los Cristeros, p. 364.

the years that it had controlled the educational system,
he told Daniels, the State must now fulfill that task.²¹

Mexican rebels were not impressed by Cárdenas' denials that his administration was neither communistic or atheistic. Although encouraged by Calles' departure from the Mexican scene, they were not satisfied. Acknowledging themselves to be the same men who had rebelled ten years earlier, the Cristeros issued another manifesto on November 20, 1936. They explained that they had resorted to arms to recover their lost rights and liberties. Besides warning that socialist schools were corrupting Mexican youth, the insurgents charged that unscrupulous factions in Mexico were destroying religion, family, and property. The signators of the manifesto asked those of their countrymen who did not wish to see Mexico submerged in communism to help the members of the Popular Liberator Army to obtain a military victory.²² This manifesto served notice to Cárdenas that, despite the government's policy of moderation, the Cristeros planned to keep their movement alive.

²¹ Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat, pp. 68-70.

²² Manifesto, Popular Liberator Army, 20 November 1936, LA:39. A copy of this manifesto may also be found in fondo XV, "Conflict religioso 1930-1937," carpeta 2 of the Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Departamento Cultural de Conducex, S.A., México, D. F.

Unlike the signators of the above manifesto, the Mexican episcopate was strongly divided in opinion as to how to respond to Cárdenas' overtures. Aware that the Church had been the loser in its confrontations with the State during the 1920's and 1930's, some prelates wanted to take advantage of the present situation to normalize relations with the Mexican government. They believed that it was in the best interests of everyone concerned to reconcile with the State. Other bishops charged that Cárdenas expected to win over the Catholic clergy and laity without offering them any tangible, meaningful concessions. As Archbishop José María González Valencia of Durango wrote, "the opening of the churches signifies little enough as long as the laws aren't repealed, especially all those relative to education." Churchmen who shared the sentiments of the archbishop of Durango opposed a religious accord on Cárdenas' terms. This division of opinion among the members of the Mexican hierarchy delayed the achievement of a meaningful understanding between Church and State.²³

Whatever their feelings about Cárdenas' overtures, churchmen did not intend to abandon their resistance to

²³ Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 147, 176; Cornelius, "Nation Building," p. 459; Pbo. José Chávez to Paul V. Murray, 25 May 1936.

revolutionary policies that violated Catholic doctrine.

On December 18 the hierarchy in a collective pastoral urged Catholics to fight by passive methods against socialist education. Labeling socialism and communism as irreconcilable enemies of the Church, the episcopate warned the faithful that priests could not absolve parents who sent their children to socialist schools. Complaining that many Catholics in past years had failed to comply with clerical instructions, the bishops explained that they were undertaking a new effort to exact obedience from Mexican parents. The prelates also warned that their cooperation was necessary for the attainment of true, effective liberty in Mexico and insisted that without their acquiescence spiritual peace could never exist there.²⁴

President Cárdenas replied indirectly to this pastoral when he presented the Mexican budget to the Chamber of Deputies in December. He declared that his administration intended to accelerate its program of public education. After announcing that two thousand new primary schools had been established in the past year, he requested a record sum for education in the coming year.²⁵ The president

²⁴ Mexican episcopate to Mexican Catholics, 18 December 1936, in New York Times, 19 December 1936, p. 3; Brown, "Church-State Relations," p. 216.

²⁵ Brown, "Church-State Relations," p. 217; New York

left no doubt that his moderated policy did not include the renunciation of revolutionary plans, particularly in education. If the Church wished to reconcile with the State, it must do so on his terms.

Also in December Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, representing the Holy See, issued instructions to govern the conduct of the hierarchy and faithful in Mexico. He explained that time had confirmed the Mexican episcopate's fear that government dispositions threatened the faith of Mexican youth. The Church official insisted that the work of dechristianization of the Mexican people would have been nullified if the faithful had kept to the letter of the episcopate's teachings. But, this had not occurred. Therefore, Pascelli advised, everyone should dedicate their energies to reducing the evils that threatened Mexico. He instructed the upper and lower clergy to use every possible means to acquaint the faithful with the Church's teachings on socialism, its doctrine on economic matters, its motives for opposing socialist education, and its desire for social justice. Catholics were told to refrain from signing any government documents that went contrary to the faith and to remember that attendance at socialist schools endangered the faith of young people.²⁶

Times, 29 December 1936, p. 11.

²⁶ Instructions, Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli, 20 December, 1936, LA:39.

Catholics did the best that they could to preserve and defend their faith in the face of difficult circumstances. Unable legally to attend church or enjoy the offices of a priest, the faithful in Veracruz held clandestine religious services in private homes. Police raided one such mass in Orizaba on the eighth of February, 1937. In the resulting commotion a fourteen-year-old girl was killed and some seventy worshippers were arrested. Local Catholics, infuriated by the death of the teenage girl, arose on February 9 and forcibly opened several churches in their city. Informed of these happenings, President Cárdenas ordered an investigation of the February 8 police raid. Meanwhile, the Veracruz legislature repealed a statute which prohibited religious services in the state. The Mexican press interpreted the legislative action to be a result of the president's determination to relax religious restrictions throughout the country. Also crediting Cárdenas, more than one hundred Orizabans telegraphed their congratulations to him.

On February 11 Governor Miguel Alemán arrived in

²⁷ New York Times, 9 February 1937, p. 14; 10 February 1937, p. 1; 11 February 1937, pp. 1, 7; Eduardo J. Correa, Mons. Rafael Guízar Valencia: El obispo santo, 1878-1938 (México: Librería de Manuel Porrúa, 1951), pp. 107-108; Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat, p. 163; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 163-164.

Orizaba and ordered the closing of the churches in the city. When this order was carried out, angered Catholics went to Alemán's office and demanded that the buildings be reopened. He replied that state law required the temples to be closed. Unwilling to accept this answer, the faithful again stormed and seized several houses of worship. In view of this volatile situation, the governor granted permission for eleven churches in Orizaba to remain open to the public. After announcing that "the [permanent] reopening of the churches will be decided upon opportunely in accordance with legal requirements," he instructed Catholics to petition the Department of Finance to entrust the buildings in question to local citizens' committees. While advising the populace to appeal to the federal government for custody of houses of worship, Alemán warned against further public demonstrations or the holding of public masses. He reminded his constituents that not a single priest was registered to officiate in the state of Veracruz. And, he declared that statutes closing churches would be enforced in cities other than Orizaba.²⁸

Opposition to Aleman's pronouncement created widespread unrest throughout Veracruz. In response to the

²⁸ New York Times, 12 February 1937, p. 1; 13 February 1937, p. 7; 14 February 1937, p. 36; 15 February 1937, p. 8.

situation, the president summoned Alemán to Mexico City where the two men held a series of conferences. As a result of these meetings, the governor on February 16 informed the press that he would allow the holding of religious services in Veracruz. But, he insisted upon strict compliance with a law which allotted only one Catholic clergyman for every one hundred thousand people. Although encouraged by this announcement which heralded the eventual improvement of religious conditions in their state, Catholics were impatient with slow moving legal processes. On February 23 hundreds of Orizabans publicly demanded that the churches in the city be immediately entrusted to their custody. Representatives of the Department of Finance refused on the grounds that formal legal procedures must be followed. On the heels of this decision, a commission of worshippers from Orizaba went to the national capital to discuss their problems with federal officials. To demonstrate the seriousness of their demands, Orizabans during the first week in March initiated a campaign of passive resistance. They vowed to withdraw their children from the public schools, to attend no public functions, and to purchase only necessities until they achieved religious freedom.²⁹

²⁹ New York Times, 17 February 1937, pp. 10, 15; 19 February 1937, p. 10; 24 February 1937, p. 11; 25 February 1937, p. 15; 7 March 1937, p. 34.

Tensions mounted in Veracruz in late February and early March. The CTM, which opposed the resumption of public religious services in the state, planned anti-religious demonstrations. Catholics telegraphed Cárdenas that bloodshed might erupt in Veracruz not only because of the activities of the CTM but also because militant elements threatened to storm the churches that were still closed. Finally, on March 14 the president issued a statement. Deemphasizing the disturbances in Veracruz, he insisted that the present trouble was limited to a few towns. Assuring that his government was not hostile to Catholicism, he declared that the faithful in Mexico had complete freedom to attend church. And, the president noted that Church-State relations were better than they had been for years, because priests had recognized the "uselessness of mixing in politics."³⁰

The religious situation in Veracruz did improve gradually. The state government eventually agreed to allow fourteen priests to register and to permit an equal number of churches to remain open within the state. While these concessions fell short of Catholic demands, in at least some parts of Veracruz in 1937 worshippers could legally attend church and enjoy the benefits of a

³⁰ New York Times, 20 February 1937, p. 1; 27 February 1937, p. 7; 1 March 1937, p. 9; 15 March 1937, p. 1.

clergymen for the first time in more than half a decade.

Moreover, in August Bishop Rafael Guízar Valencia returned to his diocese after an absence of six years.³¹

Despite improved religious conditions in some states, Pius XI in March of 1937 issued an encyclical addressed to the Mexican episcopate. The pope examined the situation of the Church in Mexico and presented practical suggestions for regaining lost ground. He emphasized that Catholic Action was preferable to violence as a means of defending Catholic rights. The Holy Father noted that the Catholic Action program did not include the formation of a Catholic political party; rather, its goals were to prepare the laity to use their rights properly and defend them legitimately. He reminded all Mexicans that they had the task of keeping their children from attending corrupt schools and providing them with religious instruction. The pope advised the clergy to evidence concern for the welfare of the masses and to loan material and religious aid to the laborer, but acknowledged the difficult situation in which Mexican clergymen functioned. Bemoaning the fact that Catholic seminaries

³¹ Michaels, "Mexican Politics," p. 164; David C. Bailey, ¡Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1974), p. 297.

in Mexico had been closed in the years since the Revolution, Pius XI expressed approval of arrangements in progress for the establishment of a Mexican seminary in the United States. Insisting that the Church could not exist unless it enjoyed liberty, he declared that only the doctrine and work of that institution could remedy the grave evils that afflicted humanity. Offering encouragement and consolation to the Mexican episcopate and their parishioners, the pope declared that "the desire of your Father is no other, but that, as you have participated so intimately in the sufferings of Christ, equally may you participate in the glory of his Resurrection."³²

As this document revealed, the pope was distressed over religious conditions in Mexico and advocated the use of passive means of protest to improve the situation. He knew from past experience that numerous Mexicans felt little if any, allegiance for the Church and that anticlericalism prevailed among revolutionaries. But, he hoped that the clergy by accepting social responsibility and by working through legitimate means could improve the lot of the Mexican masses and overcome these problems. Although hoping to win new converts to the Church's cause and to appease its enemies, the pope did not recommend the

³² Apostolic letter, Pope Pius XI to Mexican episcopate, 28 March 1937, LA:39.

formation of a Catholic political party; for, the Constitution of 1917 prohibited such an organization. Instead, he impressed upon bishops and priests the need to instruct the faithful in their political rights and duties, particularly the obligation to defend religion. Pius XI's words revealed his awareness that in the long run the Church was more likely to win a victory in the political arena than on the battlefield. The Holy Father did not renounce his traditional demands of freedom for the Church in Mexico or his insistence that socialist education was an unacceptable evil. Rather, he was proposing realistic tactics that would hopefully improve the position of the Mexican Church and lead to the ultimate achievement of its goals.³³ As a perpetual institution, the Roman Catholic Church would patiently work toward and await the resurrection of Catholic power in Mexico.

Less than a month after the pope issued his encyclical, a new figure achieved prominence in the hierarchy of the Mexican Church. In April Luis María Martínez was consecrated as archbishop of Mexico. Martínez, who had served as auxiliary bishop of Michoacán while Cárdenas was military governor there, knew and respected the president. Less rigid than his episcopal predecessor, the new

³³ New York Times, 28 March 1937, p. 23; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," p. 169; Brown, "Church-State Relations," pp. 219-220.

archbishop was receptive to the idea of a reconciliation between the Church and the State.³⁴ During the next few years he was to play a significant role in lessening religious conflict in Mexico.

At approximately the same time that the new archbishop took office, the Mexican supreme court handed down an important decision. The justices declared that the limitation law which allowed only one Catholic clergyman for the entire state of Chihuahua was unconstitutional. They noted that the Constitution of 1917, while it empowered state legislatures to determine clerical numbers, required that the spiritual needs of the people be considered. The judges based their decision on the fact that one priest could not adequately minister to all Catholics in Chihuahua. Although the supreme court's decision applied only to Chihuahua, it was applauded by Catholics throughout Mexico.³⁵

Even though Mexican religious conditions were improving steadily, José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate was one of the prelates who staunchly opposed a Church-State accord. Advocating a military victory over the Cárdenas

³⁴ Daniels, Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat, p. 163; New York Times, 26 February 1937, p. 15.

³⁵ Brown, "Church-State Relations," p. 218; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," p. 165; New York Times, 6 May 1937, p. 1.

administration, he directed a message of inspiration and encouragement to the Cristeros in July of 1937. The bishop chastized the silent and passive Mexicans who refused to aid the resistance movement. While decrying the deprivations suffered by the rebels, he reminded them that God's ways were mysterious and that victory would be theirs. Despite Manríquez y Zárate's assurances, victory eluded the rebels who fell prey to Cárdenas' relaxed religious policy and to the Church's emphasis on passive resistance. In 1936 the armed movement disappeared in Oaxaca and Veracruz, which allowed federal forces to concentrate on insurgents in other parts of Mexico. Although some of the more determined rebels remained in the field until 1940, the second Cristero uprising lost its impetus in 1937 and declined steadily.³⁶

With the decline of the rebellion, Catholics sought other means of achieving their ends. Possibly responding to the Holy See's emphasis on passive resistance, some of the faithful in 1937 formed the Unión Nacional Sinarquista (UNS). Viewing the Mexican Revolution as a blunder, they proposed to construct a mystical Mexican regime based on love, humanity, Catholicism, and their Spanish heritage. Like the Cristeros, the fanatical members of the UNS

³⁶ José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate to the defenders, in David: Publicación dedicada a los libertadores, 18 July 1937, LA:38; Jean Meyer, La Cristiada, 1:376-377.

claimed to be fighting for the Catholic faith against a godless government inspired by Russia. Unlike the rebels, the Sinarquistas relied on peaceful methods of resistance. The organization grew steadily in numbers and influence, and by 1940 the UNS claimed five hundred thousand members.³⁷

While Catholics were becoming involved in the Sinarquista movement, a significant change occurred in the leadership of the Mexican Church. In August, 1937, Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores resigned as apostolic delegate. His resignation was viewed in religious circles as foreshadowing the resumption of relations between the Holy See and the Mexican government. This view was reinforced when Luis María Martínez, the new archbishop of Mexico, also assumed the duties of apostolic delegate. For the first time in many years Church authority in Mexico centered in one man, a man who understood Mexican politics and had a gift for diplomacy.³⁸

Since 1924 the Mexican Church had vainly resisted subordination to the State. In the resultant thirteen

³⁷ Albert L. Michaels, "Fascism and Sinarquismo: Popular Nationalisms against the Mexican Revolution," Journal of Church and State 8(1966), pp. 238-239, 243-246, 248-249; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 330, 339.

³⁸ New York Times, 4 September 1937, p. 4; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 169-170; Brown, "Church-State Relations," pp. 218-219.

years of religious strife, anticlerical elements had attacked the Church at every opportunity and innumerable Catholics had been estranged from their faith. Believing that nothing could be gained by prolonging a futile struggle that divided the Mexican nation, Martínez adopted as a major aim the attainment of unity and harmony within his homeland. He felt that under Cárdenas' regime the clergy and their parishioners could enjoy at least a modicum of religious freedom. And, like the papacy, he was convinced that the Church could more successfully preserve the faith in Mexico and achieve its goals by restoring amicable relations with the State. Consequently, in his first pastoral letter of February, 1938, the archbishop of Mexico issued an urgent appeal for peace and refrained from criticizing government policies or condemning any constitutional provisions. He not only evidenced a sincere desire to normalize Church-State relations, but also influenced other members of the episcopate toward that end. Martínez' earnest efforts earned for him the appellation of the "peacemaking archbishop."³⁹

³⁹ Plenn, Mexico Marches, p. 208; Brown, "Church-State Relations," pp. 219, 221; New York Times, 4 February 1938, p. 4; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," p. 171. Luis María Martínez' peacemaking efforts were facilitated by the absence of two militant prelates from the Mexican scene. Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez had died in 1936, and Bishop José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate was still in

The most striking evidence of reconciliation between Church and State occurred in the spring of 1938, when the Cárdenas administration expropriated British and American oil holdings in Mexico. This move directly resulted in diplomatic problems with England and the United States and indirectly triggered a rebellion led by Saturnino Cedillo, who disapproved of Cárdenas' land distribution program and had presidential aspirations. In the face of these problems, Cárdenas needed moral and financial support, which he received from a variety of sources. On April 5 Archbishop José Garibi y Rivera of Guadalajara asked Mexican Catholics to raise money to help reimburse the foreign oil companies. The following month the Episcopal Committee officially approved of the contributing of funds by Catholics to pay for expropriated petroleum properties. The prelates declared that such contributions would serve as an eloquent testimony that Roman Catholic doctrines encouraged citizens to fulfill their obligations. In churches throughout Mexico funds were solicited, and large numbers of the faithful responded. Equally significant, Mexican Catholics refused to have anything to do with the Cedillo rebellion. Pleased by these circumstances, President Cárdenas with typical revolutionary hyperbole

exile in the United States (Michaels, "Mexican Politics," p. 169).

declared that for the first time in his nation's history the government was receiving cooperation from Catholics.⁴⁰

Although Mexican Catholics supported the federal government during the expropriation crisis, they did not cease to demand greater religious freedom. Tabasco, where no churches were open and no priests legally exercised their functions, was of special concern to the *Unión Nacional Sinarquista*. In early May of 1938, Salvador Abascal, head of the UNS, organized a massive public protest against conditions in that state. A group of demonstrators seized the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Villahermosa and refused to disperse upon the governor's order. Catholics quickly restored the edifice to useable condition and in mid-May held a public mass. Determined to take punitive action, Governor Fernández Manero surrounded the church with soldiers, who fired upon the people entrenched in the building. Although three people were killed, the worshippers remained passive and the troops withdrew. In a similar incident in another city six people died when police attacked demonstrators demanding the restoration of razed churches in their state. Learning

⁴⁰ Brown, "Church-State Relations," p. 221; William Weber Johnson, *Heroic Mexico: The Violent Emergence of a Modern Nation* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968), pp. 416-417; *New York Times*, 6 April 1938, p. 4; 28 April 1938, p. 10; 3 May 1938, p. 12; Daniels, *Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat*, pp. 246-247; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 171-172, 178, 195-196.

of the violence erupting in Tabasco, the secretary of gobernación denounced Catholics for their unruly demonstrations, but rebuked state officials for allowing harm to befall the demonstrators. The secretary recommended that the faithful follow due process of law to realize their demands. He advised them to petition Governor Manero to reopen the churches and asked them to send a copy of the petition to the federal government. Despite Catholic petitions, however, improved conditions of worship were slow to come in Tabasco. Nevertheless, the persistent use of passive means of protest eventually brought results. At Cárdenas' insistence Manero relaxed Tomás Garrido Canabal's religious restrictions, and Tabascans were again allowed within limits to practice their religion.⁴¹

By mid-1938, then, the Mexican religious scene was notably better than it had been in past years. The second Cristero rebellion, while still in existence in some parts of Mexico, was on its way to extinction. Catholics, placing increasing reliance on passive means of resistance,

⁴¹ Joseph Ledit, "Sinarquismo Victory in Tabasco," in James W. Wilkie and Albert L. Michaels, eds., Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval, 1910-1940 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 223-226; Michaels, "Mexican Politics," pp. 165-166; New York Times, 1 June 1938, p. 1; 4 June 1938, p. 6; 5 June 1938, p. 37; Alan M. Kirshner, "Tomás Garrido Canabal and the Mexican Red Shirt Movement" (Ph. D. diss., New York University, 1970), pp. 262-263.

were achieving significant gains. Even traditionally anticlerical states were relaxing their extreme religious restrictions. Despite differences in philosophy and goals, conciliatory leaders like Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis María Martínez were working to achieve a religious accord that would prove more lasting than that of June 21, 1929. Later events testified that they succeeded in this task.

In 1940 Miguel Avila Camacho, Cárdenas' successor to the presidency, publicly declared that he was a believer in the Catholic faith. This historic, oft-quoted declaration signaled a new era in Church-State relations. Having established its superiority, the Mexican government exercised leniency. Avila Camacho's administration not only reamended Article III to eliminate socialist education but also relaxed enforcement of the religious provisions of the Constitution of 1917. Priests again began to wear clerical garb in the streets. Religious celebrations were held out-of-doors, and Catholic schools operated openly.⁴² After years of conflict, Church and State in Mexico achieved a workable relationship based upon a mutual commitment to peaceful coexistence.

⁴² John Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America: A History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 410-411.

APPENDIX

ARTICLE 130 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF 1917

Corresponde a los Poderes Federales ejercer en materia de culto religioso y disciplina externa la intervención que designen las leyes. Las demás autoridades obrarán como auxiliares de la Federación.

El Congreso no puede dictar leyes estableciendo o prohibiendo religión cualquiera.

El matrimonio es un contrato civil. Este y los demás actos del estado civil de las personas son de la exclusiva competencia de los funcionarios y autoridades del orden civil, en los términos prevenidos por las leyes, y tendrán la fuerza y validez que las mismas les atribuyan.

La simple promesa de decir verdad y de cumplir las obligaciones que se contraen, sujeta al que la hace, en caso de que faltare a ella, a las penas que con tal motivo establece la ley.

La ley no reconoce personalidad alguna a las agrupaciones religiosas denominadas iglesias.

Los ministros de los cultos serán considerados como personas que ejercen una profesión y estarán directamente sujetos a las leyes que sobre la materia se dicten.

Las legislaturas de los Estados únicamente tendrán facultad de determinar, según las necesidades locales, el

número máximo de ministros de los cultos.

Para ejercer en los Estados Unidos Mexicanos el ministerio de cualquier culto se necesita ser mexicano por nacimiento.

Los ministros de los cultos nunca podrán, en reunión pública o privada constituida en junta, ni en actos del culto o de propaganda religiosa, hacer critica de las leyes fundamentales del pais, de las autoridades en particular o en general del Gobierno; no tendrán voto activo ni pasivo, ni derecho para asociarse con fines politicos.

Para dedicar al culto nuevos locales abiertos al público se necesita permiso de la Secretaría de Gobernación, oyendo previamente al Gobierno del Estado. Debe haber en todo templo un encargado de él, responsable ante la autoridad del cumplimiento de las leyes sobre disciplina religiosa, en dicho templo y de los objectos pertenecientes al culto.

El encargado de cada templo, en unión de diez vecinos más, avisará desde luego a la autoridad municipal quién es la persona que está a cargo del referido templo. Todo cambio se avisará por el ministro que cese, acompañado del entrante y diez vecinos más. La autoridad municipal, bajo pena de destitución y multa hasta de mil pesos por cada caso, cuidará del cumplimiento de esta disposición; bajo la misma pena llevará un libro de registro de los templos,

y otro, de los encargados. De todo permiso para abrir al público un nuevo templo, o del relativo al cambio de un encargado, la autoridad municipal dará noticia a la Secretaría de Gobernación, por conducto del gobernador del Estado. En el interior de los templos podrán recaudarse donativos en objectos muebles.

Por ningún motivo se revalidará, otorgará dispensa o se determinará cualquier otro trámite que tenga por fin dar validez en los cursos oficiales a estudios hechos en los establecimientos destinados a la enseñanza profesional de los ministros de los cultos. La autoridad que infrinja esta disposición será penalmente responsable; y la dispensa o trámite referido será nulo y traerá consigo la nulidad del título profesional para cuya obtención haya sido parte la infracción de este precepto.

Las publicaciones periódicas de carácter confesional, ya sean por su programa, por su título o simplemente por sus tendencias ordinarias, no podrán comentar asuntos políticos nacionales, ni informar sobre actos de las autoridades del país o de particulares, que se relacionen directamente con el functionamiento de las instituciones públicas.

Queda estrictamente prohibida la formación de toda clase de agrupaciones políticas cuyo título tenga alguna palabra o indicación cualquiera que la relacione con alguna confesión religiosa. No podrán celebrarse en los

templos reuniones de carácter político.

No podrán heredar por sí, ni por interpósita persona, ni recibir por ningún título, un ministro de cualquier culto, un inmueble ocupado por cualquier asociación de propaganda religiosa, o de fines religiosos, o de beneficencia. Los ministros de los cultos tienen incapacidad legal para ser herederos, por testamento, de los ministros del mismo culto, o de un particular con quien no tengan parentesco dentro del cuarto grado.

Los bienes muebles o inmuebles del clero o de asociaciones religiosas se regirán para su adquisición por particulares, conforme al artículo 27 de esta Constitución.

Los procesos por infracción a las anteriores bases nunca serán vistos en Jurado.

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